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IS CHRISTIANITY THE FINAL RELIGION?



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IS CHRISTIANITY THE FINAL RELIGION?

A CANDID ENQUIRY
WITH THE MATERIALS FOR AN OPINION

BY
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TO MY WIFE

FOREWORD

I BEGAN the collection of materials for this book during the war, partly because the subject interested me, partly because I needed a change of occupation in the few spare moments of leisure which occurred during a long spell of hospital work of a peculiarly distressing kind.

Two months after demobilisation the S.P.C.K. claimed me from Cambridge for its new propaganda, before I was able to complete the task, and I have thus been compelled to finish the book somewhat under difficulties, and to work at it after office hours.

The reader will I hope bear this in mind if he finds the treatment of the subject unequal in all its parts. One might of course have postponed publication, but this would have meant much more than postponement, since one's chance of the necessary leisure seems to grow less rather than greater.

The resulting essay must therefore be taken not as an attempt to say the last word on a subject of supreme importance, but to open a discussion upon it, however unworthily, by surveying the problem and stating a case. After all, it is a matter

on which every one of us must sooner or later make up his mind, unless some sort of paralysis is to overtake religion. Professor Gwatkin once compared the present situation to a wrestling match in which the stronger of the opponents had loosened his grip upon his adversary in order to get a fresh and a tighter hold. Christianity, he said, was loosening its present grip on the world only in order to gain a new and more powerful one. Is it not probable that out of his store of wisdom and knowledge he was interpreting aright the signs of the times? Certainly his great Catholic contemporary in the chair of Modern History was in full agreement with him.

I owe much to my wife for her secretarial help. All other acknowledgments have, I hope, been made in their proper places.

A. C. BOUQUET.

KENSINGTON, *September*, 1920.

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INTRODUCTION

THE subject treated of in this book is one which has received more attention outside England than within. Numerous essays upon it have appeared in Germany, and one can well believe that if French thought had not tended to become positivist or secularist, French clearness of vision would have made at least some helpful contribution towards the solution of the problems involved in it. Only one serious treatise dealing with the matter has so far as I know been published in the United States,¹ and that under the influence of Teutonic philosophy. The reason for this is not far to seek. A twofold contrast in matters of religion exists between the Anglo-Saxon and the Teutonic temperaments. The Anglo-Saxon temperament is expansive rather than intensive,² and takes more naturally to missionary enterprise than to the examination of the basis of belief. Its faults

¹ *The Finality of the Christian Religion*, Burman G. Foster, Chicago, 1906. Prof. Foster is a Liberal Baptist theologian.

N.B.—There is also one small chapter in Principal Cairns' *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and one in Dr. H. R. Mackintosh's *The Originality of Christianity*. Both writers are Scotch Presbyterians.

² See P. Sorge : " German unchurchliness and English churchliness," in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 1914.

are intellectual rather than moral. In Germany, on the other hand, the opposite has been true. It is admitted that although individual Germans have done honourable work in the mission field in the past, they have been in recent years proportionately few in number compared with English and American missionaries, and have been less generously financed.¹ The German mind has occupied itself much more with abstract enquiry into fundamentals, with the result that its weakness has lain in the sphere of evangelism. It has fogged itself with speculation.

The second element in the general contrast may be given in the words of a well-known German² to whom it will be necessary to make frequent reference in these pages. "England and the United States in spite of the remarkable differences between them nevertheless exhibit a similarity, in which they

¹ Taking the pfennig as the unit of calculation, Prof. Troeltsch (*Missions in the Modern World*, New Edition, 1913) gives the annual contribution per head from the various European countries in the following proportion :

England, over 120.	German Switzerland, 51·6.
France, 120.	French " 24.
Norway, 41·4.	Sweden, 19·6. Germany, 16.
Holland, 22.	(<i>Collected Works</i> , p. 787.)

² Troeltsch, 1912, *Collected Works*, pp. 69 and 73.

See W. E. Orchard, *The Outlook for Religion*, It is worth pointing out that the prevailing notion that Liberal views in Germany are in any way connected with the war is unsound. Many German scholars and most Pfarrers are orthodox, and their war sermons, though inflammatory, are specimens of comparatively old-fashioned Protestantism. It is only the smaller band of Liberals whose books find a sale and a translator in this country, and to them we owe the distorted impression that German Lutherans are mostly "Unitarian." We must not forget moreover the very large number of Roman Catholics in Germany. A liberal mystic such as Troeltsch, though not a pure Pacifist, is not at all sympathetic towards the Junkers and Pan-Germans.

contrast strongly with ourselves. If we seek to define this contrast, it lies in the essentially different position which religion occupies socially and politically with us and with them. What is for us so significant is the much stronger social influence of the religious element among the Anglo-Saxons. It is visible in a thousand customs and outward circumstances. It displays itself in vast developments of missionary activity and brings with it outside the old-established churches the phenomena of ever-new revivals and sectarian movements."

"With Germany the case is completely different. Christianity, in spite of many earnest adherents, is in a very unsettled state, and Christianity is the only form of religion seriously before our people. Our condition is consequently that of a severe religious crisis. The proletariat hates the Church, and therewith Christianity. The intelligentsia has almost entirely ceased to believe in Christianity as containing permanent truth. The middle classes and country folk hold to Christianity more from custom than anything else. The churches are recognised as factors in politics, but their social and moral influence is virtually nil. They have been compelled to accommodate their own dogmas to those of science and their own ethics to those of the state, to the ethics of militarism and capitalism; and so, wherever they have most seriously pursued this course, they have completed such a fundamental fusion with the dominant elements in our modern civilisation as to be hardly distinguishable from it. If at any point they separate from the state they do so not

on questions of ethics, but in their stubborn adherence to dogmas which fly in the face of science. In contradistinction to the Anglo-Saxons, Germans strive after pitiless theoretical clarity, and despise practical curtailments and compromises. They have no use for the idea that one can or should spare the religious fabric of a nation's life merely on practical grounds." These sentences are culled from Troeltsch's own collection of his essays and range between the years 1906-1913. He illustrates his point by the fact that both in England and the United States, the Christian Churches are regarded even by statesmen who stand outside their communion, as "weapons against evil,"¹ and that it is possible in England for a clergyman of the Established Church to be an ardent socialist.

The quotations just given will perhaps lead some observers to remark that there was more in common between the religious conditions of England and Germany in 1914 than they had supposed, and that the compliments Troeltsch pays us are undeserved, but on the whole the contrast is a true one. The Anglo-Saxon is furnished by his temperament with an apologetic weapon which is denied to his Teuton brother. Dimly conscious that among those who (unlike himself) are interested in ideas the theological background of faith has for the time being become fluid, he turns to the practical promotion of medical and industrial missions, and the implanting

¹ Cf. Mr. Bonar Law's speech at the second reading of the Church of England (Powers) Bill, Nov. 7th, 1919, Parliamentary Reports.

of a Christian standard of morality among primitive and pagan peoples, and is rewarded by finding these enterprises effective and beneficial. In actual fact he finds that they work. Human needs are satisfied and the sure shield of a pragmatist philosophy is brandished in the faces of the intellectuals whom he distrusts. This must not be taken as in any sense a depreciation of the splendid philanthropic, civilising, and evangelistic work of our over-seas missions. It is only a warning as to the way in which they minister to a national weakness, *i.e.* the shelving of ultimate problems.

We will venture upon one more quotation from our professor. "The Lutheran faith has disappeared from the greater part of German town populations, and their typical religious customs have long since been disintegrated by modern ideas. Our people is no longer sure what it believes, and cannot seriously consider the propagation of a faith about which it is not agreed at home, which is in process of being rent in pieces, or at any rate transformed under the influence of modern ideas, and whose future seems fraught with so much gloom and perplexity. This condition besets all modern nations, but it is more marked among the German protestants than among the Americans or the English."¹

"Which besets all modern nations." That is precisely the point. In spite of the moderation of the language of Troeltsch it is impossible to deny that the condition he describes is increasingly that of Christianity in this country. We cannot

¹ *Die Mission*, etc., p. 787 and following, Troeltsch, *op. cit.*

profitably continue any longer to debate problems of Christian archaeology and literary criticism as though their solution were a mere academic amusement. We can no longer delude ourselves with the supposition that pageantry is more important than truth. Nor can statesmen, unless they are wilfully insincere, any longer describe Christianity as a valuable moral ally without witnessing at the same time to the soundness of its intellectual basis.

There are in every country, including our own, industrial leaders and social democrats who hate the Church. With numbers of people, here as in Germany, it is a light matter whether they call themselves Christians or no.¹ In the New World as much as in England or Germany, great town populations have arisen whose moral and spiritual growth has been completely outstripped by the development of their industrial and economic prosperity. We have become painfully conscious in our vast armies and in our great cities of the presence of countless multitudes whose outlook is neo-Pagan.

As Anglo-Saxons we have so far been delivered from the worst effects of this by the social supremacy which we have hitherto accorded to organised Christianity. But we cannot much longer enjoy this immunity. Religio-historical studies have created doubts in many minds about the finality of any of the Christian dogmas, and so about the finality of the morals. It is in fact the social supremacy that is now challenged. "Why should

¹ See p. 271.

it continue," say its critics, "if it is not based on some foundation which is demonstrably absolute?" To live any longer upon the moral reserves of Christianity without solidly establishing its claim to finality has become impossible. It is the fashion nowadays to find little or no defence for any institution whose roots lie deep in the past. Our age has seen so many cherished landmarks swept away that it is almost ceasing to regard permanency as a virtue.

Now as a child of this generation and a convinced Liberal I confess to much sympathy for this frame of mind, and I have never been happy merely as a defender of anything. I would much rather conduct an offensive. But there are serious elements of weakness in this ruthless discarding of institutions. The moral value of the war, if we can speak of such a thing, has lain in two results :

(1) It has illuminated the contrast between various ways of living, and some of these, notably the acquisitive, have looked very paltry under the fierce glare.

(2) It has made enough of European society fluid for it to be possible to see what are the elements which refuse to melt or dissolve, the solid particles that defy change or disintegration: and Christianity is proving a very tough morsel, as our friends the Rationalists reluctantly acknowledge. Thus a writer in the R.P.A.¹ annual for 1919 ruefully admits :

"The Gospel miracles . . . are the veriest trifles compared with the authentic, undeniable miracle of Christianity's mere existence. . . . Subjected to a

¹ Rationalist Press Association.

bombardment of unexampled violence from every point of the material and moral universe, it shows never a sign of surrender. . . . Blown sky-high to-day it presents an unbroken and smiling surface to-morrow. . . . No other religion, be it remembered, is subjected to anything like the same ordeal. . . . It is the survival of Christianity in the realistic atmosphere of the West that is such an amazing and impressive phenomenon. Defences it has none ; its last bastions were pulverised at least a generation ago. But still it rears its head, serene, arrogant, undismayed. . . . It is just here that we find ourselves face to face with the miracle. Discredited beyond expression — historically, intellectually, morally bankrupt—Christianity is nevertheless as prosperous to all appearances as ever it was."

It must be admitted then that the lovers of change and flux have found in the recent dissolution of society a good many solid particles of which they cannot rid themselves. On the other hand, the developments of neo-Paganism have provided not a few rather unpleasant shocks. We have seen what it really does mean on a large scale to renounce pity and purity, and to give up speaking the truth ; and in spite of the obstinacy that we who still call ourselves Christians have displayed, it needs to be remembered that there are many persons who believe that the new morality has come to stay, and who hold that, harsh and unfamiliar as it may seem, it must be endured, since truth is relative and the values of the Christian life are in process of being superseded.

But it is not only on the moral side that institutional Christianity has been attacked.

There are those, who, while earnestly desirous not to depreciate the moral or spiritual values of the Christian creed, are not satisfied that it speaks the last word in spiritual certainty or that it is the final revelation of spiritual reality. Such are the apostles of Spiritualism and the various forms of Theosophy, as well as the rather unconvincing theistic clergyman of Mr. Israel Zangwill's *The Next Religion*, and the drug-taking bishop whose soul has been conveniently portrayed for us by Mr. H. G. Wells. Mr. Wells has tried to establish a kind of spiritual kinship between himself and his various contemporaries in other parts of the world, such for instance as Sir Rabindranath Tagore. It is difficult at present to see that such dogmas of theirs as will stand the test of examination are really an advance upon those of the great Christian mystics, and we cannot feel sure that they have discovered anything new; yet their claim remains, *i.e.* that Christianity is not final, and it is in need of sober examination.

There are happily not a few leaders of organised labour who insist that the welfare of the new democracies depends upon their respect for spiritual values, and who seek a spiritual and metaphysical basis for their proposed reconstruction of society. But even for such the nature of that spiritual basis calls for definition, since it is at present regarded by some of their contemporaries as a matter for future discovery rather than of present inheritance. It greatly needs to be made clear whether the

spiritual basis of society is to be Christian or post-Christian, Conservative or Liberal Catholic, Unitarian with a Christian bias, or something wholly new. For thoughtful people these are not idle questions, and it would be a matter for deep regret if it had to be written down in history that at this critical stage Christian thinkers left the public to choose between :

- (1) Rigid and unsympathetic conservatism of an obscurantist temper.
- (2) An amalgam of pseudo-scientific nonsense calling itself Theosophy ;
- (3) The shallow inventions of contemporary journalism ;
- (4) " Every man for himself and the devil take the unsuccessful seeker " ;

while they themselves, secure in the private guidance of an esoteric philosophy based on probability, delivered no challenge to the adventurous, no ringing message to recall sinners from their evil way, no absolute and final proclamation of spiritual truth to hearten and inspire the commonwealth of nations, no God-story radiating light and peace and hope to comfort men of good-will.

I find myself, therefore, if only for selfish reasons, forced to hammer out as best I may the fundamental grounds for maintaining the finality and absoluteness of Christianity, and the reasonable basis for its claim to set its fixed and authoritative standard for conduct in the past. Remembering that the temperament of my countrymen is expansive rather than intensive,¹ I feel that I can best

¹ See Sorge, cf. cit

serve the cause to which I am pledged by examining the finality of the basis of our Christian belief. I do so, of course, as a humble private individual, whose conclusions can in no sense bind the body he serves, but I none the less approach the task with a grave sense of responsibility. (If the results dissatisfy the reader, he must remember that I am only one individual.) The Gospel story as far as chronology is concerned lies a long way behind us.¹ Try as we may, it is receding further and further every year. It will recede in authority unless we can most definitely establish its *absolute* value for religion and for human life as a whole.

It may not always be necessary to do this. The Absoluteness of Christianity may come eventually to receive more or less tacit acceptance. It is by no means impossible to imagine a world society in the future which will be as sure of its ground as Mediterranean society in the thirteenth century.

That at any rate is the direction in which my own faith moves. The present unsettlement may easily prove to be part of a dark period preceding a new dawn. Fluidity of belief among the rank and file need not overshadow the fact that, among the leaders, vital Christianity has seldom perhaps possessed the materials for a stronger intellectual

¹ "It is most wonderful," said a West African native, "that the good white people suffer dangers and hardships on account of Hesu, a Great God about whom they tell us, who lived long ago in the very beginning of the world."

"Jesus Christ lived a very long time ago, and he was not so well educated as Lenin and Trotsky." (Overheard by Mr. H. V. Keeling in Russia—two peasants talking in a train.)

See also *The Army and Religion* (evidence).

position than to-day. All that is needed is adventurous courage, and the avoidance of such a conspiracy of silence as will create a false impression of the real grounds of belief. I look forward to the time when Christianity in some form not yet fully fashioned will be universally regarded as the synonym and equivalent of religion (other faiths having faded away); so that world-development may proceed from it as an axiom, and its only opponents be those who since they love darkness rather than light are reluctant to put themselves under its *moral* yoke.¹

Yet, as has been said, the present age can hardly conceive of truth except as relative. It has had a surfeit of organised religion of all descriptions, and has acquired a sufficient smattering of the comparative science of religion to make it look askance at all claims to spiritual finality, from whatever source they proceed, Eastern or Western. It has at the moment no effective substitute for the idea of continuous progress to which for a generation or more it has been devoted, and in which, since August 1914, it has come to place a diminishing confidence. It has also a great deal to say about theological readjustment. Now mere adjustment is not enough for something that claims to be absolute. Much of the apologetic to be found in libraries seems to consist of "Reasons for not giving up believing in Christianity," and is deplorably timid.

¹ This will involve of course the development of a world-state or league of states, and the taming and subjection of the present foolish and excessive nationalism.

The younger generation does not want and will not be content with timid and defensive apologetic. It demands something more glowing and positive. Many institutions have managed to survive long after they have ceased to play any useful part in the life of the world, solely by a clever policy of adjustment. I feel that for a self-respecting religion that is not a sufficiently inviting prospect ; it is on the contrary miserably undignified. Moreover, life is too expensive nowadays for so serious a thing as religion to be expressed in a public institution which is merely the fruit of compromise and adjustment. If, therefore, Christianity really has a message of transcendent value to transmit, it cannot be content to prove that there is adequate *nihil obstat* evidence for continuing to believe in the Virgin Birth of our Lord, or that the doctrine of indulgences is not as bad as it seems, nor can it without uneasy qualms continue to convert backward races to bibliolatry¹ or the pre-scientific conceptions of the medieval world, on the ground that the civilised peoples of the west have thrust these ancient beliefs from them and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. It must have something greater and more universally positive to offer.

My subject then is the Absoluteness of Christianity, or the claims of Christianity to be the absolute religion. These claims will have to be considered in their relation to the general conception of religion

¹ See Harris, *Africa, Slave or Free*, and the reports of the "Heart of Africa" Mission ; also *The Christ and His Critics*, by the Bishop of Zanzibar, 1920.

and to the historical documents of Christianity, as well as in their relation to the Christian belief about Revelation, Atonement, Conduct, and the Future Life.

As the discussion which follows deliberately puts on one side the question of miracles, it may be well to explain the reason for doing so, once and for all.

The choice of Personalism in opposition to Monism, as a general interpretation of the ultimate nature of the Universe, involves acquiescence in the possibility of matter being controlled by personal agency to the disturbance or supersession of the normal course of events ; while even the normal course assumes a wholly different aspect if its superb sequence is felt to be an expression of a great Personal Will. The life of Our Lord may be treated quite fearlessly by historical critics, provided that they do not dismiss the whole of the miracles on the ground that at this stage it is impossible to say exactly what took place. Some of the wonders may disappear as doublets or even as acted parables, but the evidence for the bulk remains good, and since personal activity may be held to lie as much behind the normal sequence of events as behind their interruption, I do not think that those who hold the doctrine of Our Lord's Personality to which I hope our investigations will lead us, will be disturbed if the miraculous stories come to be interpreted by some devout scholars in a way which will make them less like feats of magic. There will probably now remain always two schools of believers :

(1) Those who regard the evidence as conclusive that all the events took place in the exact form as stated.

(2) Those who regard the evidence as conclusive that some events such as are related took place, but are not sure about the exact form of them, and would query one or two, while they are satisfied that they firmly establish the impact upon the world of a unique Personality.

Neither of these schools can actually be called heretical, since (a) both accept the doctrine of Personalism with all that it involves, and (b) both regard belief in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as an essential part of the Christian religion and treat that life as the central Act of God for this planet.

Those of the second class, though they may call themselves "modernists," are plainly not "modernists" in the form in which modernism stands condemned, *i.e.* as denying

(a) The Revelation of Jesus as the Revelation of God in Action.

(b) Christianity as a religion of Historical Fact.

(c) Christ as in some sense Absolute.

It seems a pity that the two classes should be at pains to attack one another. They would be far better employed each in defending its own faith against the real doctrines of "modernism."

I cannot feel that it would be a loss to Christianity if the first class merged into the second,¹ provided

¹ It is of course conceivable that some turn of the evidence might absorb the second class into the first.

that the beliefs outlined in (a) and (b) were held fast. The real danger lies in the undermining of the faith of both classes alike by the subtle suggestions:

(i) That because Christ's humanity was real and not artificial, He was therefore a Preacher rather than an Actor, and that His message was divine rather than His Personality.

(ii) That the essence of Christianity lies in values rather than in facts.

(iii) That the enunciation of such values is only of relative and not of absolute importance, and that there may yet be a new revelation.

(iv) That God does not act in History.

This fourfold contention is the real enemy of Christianity.

I have therefore set aside the question of miracles, even of such weighty matters as the Virgin Birth and the Bodily Resurrection, not because I deny them—that would be both unscientific and presumptuous—but because I am convinced that

(1) No discussion of them can in any way compare in importance with the refutation of the four suggestions just enumerated.

(2) Our Lord did not, even as sharing in the humanity of His own age, regard them as evidential of Himself. When St. Peter says that Our Lord was raised from the pangs of death "because it was not possible that He should be holden of it," he is in close touch with the mind of Christ. Our Lord Himself intensely disliked the appeal to "signs and wonders," and performed His works of mercy

simply because He could not resist the loving impulse wherever human faith would allow. The survival of our Lord after His execution need not necessarily have been a victorious one. Not only immortality but even a bodily resurrection may be emptied of its value if continued existence only contain dreary cycles of repetition. The whole essence of the Resurrection Gospel is that faithfulness unto death is the gateway to a new life which is an *advance* upon the old, that Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God, receives the promise of the Holy Spirit, and is declared in spite of His apparent defeat to be the real victorious Messiah. The logic by which this is conveyed belongs to the age of the apostles. That they were led to form the conviction is what matters for us ; also it matters that they acted upon it—with results.

(3) Much of what is called miraculous is, like "glossolalia," not confined to Christianity.

If it is a fact, it proves too much. The real evidence of Christ is the power of His Career to change men's lives. He presents a doctrine of the Divine Personality and Character, involving moral holiness, and culminating in a disaster which the faith of His chosen few rightly discerns to have been complete victory.

(4) The essential basis of Christian faith is the belief and trust in a Personal God, who has revealed Himself most completely in the Being we rejoice to call Our Lord and Master. Once grant that, and all life is in some sense a miracle, that is to say, an expression of the free creative guidance of Per-

sonality. All is natural, and all is supernatural. There is but one order, not two.

NOTE TO INTRODUCTION.

It will perhaps be urged that Our Lord appeals to miracles in an evidential sense in his reply to the disciples of John the Baptist. This is a misunderstanding of the passage. Our Lord's answer sent to John is a vindication of prophecy, an appeal to the evidence that the disciples of John had actually seen the Messianic ideal fulfilled. The actions to which he refers are all mentioned in Isaiah xxix., 18-19 and xxxv., and in the Messianic Psalms. The Divine Visitor of His People will show wonderful works of healing, love, and mercy. He will come as sunshine in darkness, as life among the dead, as a breath of pure fresh air amid a plague-stricken and befogged population: "he shall be favourable to the simple and needy, and shall preserve the souls of the poor."

"The poor" in the language of post-exilic literature, generally refers to the pious and faithful Jews. It does not carry the sense which it bears in English, but is an evasive way of referring to the Hebrew people under persecution. Cf. the Jewish use of "the nation" as a phrase by which members of it refer to themselves. Speaking generally, we may say that Our Lord never thought at all about giving "signs" to the unbelieving, but only to His followers, while the evidential use of miraculous happenings, "suspensions or contraventions of known laws of nature," is entirely foreign to him. This way of regarding the supernatural events in Christ's life is a relatively modern one. To the people of His day and environment there were no such things as laws of nature.

CHAPTER I

OF THE NATURE OF RELIGION, AND ITS CONTINUED EXISTENCE

WHAT is a person? The term is easier to use than to define. Any plain man will undertake to make a rough classification of what objects he regards as personal and what as impersonal, and the intuitions of plain people are usually of considerable value. There is obviously every reason for regarding a watch as impersonal and a cabinet minister as a person. Difficulties only begin to arise when it is pointed out that there is a very large borderland between the two extremes where the plain individual becomes perplexed owing to his not having provided himself with a clear definition. There are some stunted and degenerate human beings who seem deficient in personal qualities, and there are many bright and intelligent animals whose mental equipment makes them very good companions for man. Ultimately we are led to define personality as that which has the power to enter into relationships, and religion as the fact of such relationships coming to exist. The old legal term "persona" meant an individual unit capable of holding property or

possessing attributes, and it is in this sense that the word Person occurs in the "Quicumque vult." In harmony with this, personality has sometimes been defined as the combination of certain tendencies in a single consciousness. One English philosopher¹ says that a being who is personal is self-conscious and aware of his own existence, and that when the adjective "personal" is applied to God, it means that He has that awareness of His own existence which we have of our own existence. The precise form of this definition is open to question. Is it to be argued that if a sea-anemone is conscious of its own existence, then a sea-anemone is a person; and is it also to be argued that we are as much aware of our own existence as God is of His? It is plain that if the first of these propositions is true, then personality must be held to vary either in degree or kind, or both, since if a sea-anemone is a person and Mr. X. is a person, then Mr. X. and the sea-anemone are said to resemble one another in respect of personality, which is far from obvious, since the element of consciousness and the power to enter into relationships possessed by the sea-anemone are admittedly much more restricted than they are in the case of a human being. And further, if the second proposition be literally true, then we are as equally aware, being finite, of our existence as God who is infinite is of His existence, which is absurd, since finite awareness cannot be the same as infinite awareness. Even were we to assume with some thinkers the finiteness of God, such finiteness is

¹ M'Taggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 186.

never regarded as the same in degree as that of any single human being, as in this case He would not be God but simply the $n + 1^{\text{th}}$ personality in a world of n similar personalities. So that even in this case the measure of our awareness of our own existence could not be the same as the measure of the awareness of His existence possessed by a finite God ; and of any god finite or infinite it can only be said that He is *not less* aware of His existence than we are of ours, but certainly more. It would seem from these considerations that the definitions of personality and of religion must be expressed¹ somewhat as follows. Personality is the possession of self-consciousness and of the power to enter into relationships : religion denotes the sum of all the facts connected with the existence of such relationships. If we define religion as a state of inter-linking or of relationship, and personality as that condition of consciousness which makes such relationships possible, then it is plain that by usage and agreement these two terms, as commonly employed, are used in an artificially restricted sense, and that in strict logic we must admit the existence of many rudimentary forms of personality and of many rudimentary forms of religion. For well over a thousand years the word religion as applied to human beings has been used to denote a binding relationship, the observance of which guarantees against concentration on the self. Now the root of life is responsiveness ;² and life must needs involve

¹ Provisionally at any rate.

² Or as the biologists term it "irritability."

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responsiveness if it is to be healthy. The lowest organism therefore contains within itself the elements out of which may evolve the highest known forms of personality and the highest conceivable type of religion. Any relationship involving at least *one* conscious being may thus be called a religion, and the condition upon which any conscious organism retains its health is that it practises a religion.

On this construction the relations of animals to their young, and of social animals to their community may not unfairly be regarded as real though rudimentary examples of religious relationship. Other instances may be found in the friendships that exist between domestic animals and their owners, in the devotion of craftsmen and creative workers to their several occupations, and pre-eminently in the relationships which prevail between human beings, whether as blood relations or as friends.

It will no doubt be objected that this is a very loose way in which to use the terms "person" and "religion." I am firmly convinced, however, that it is wholly justified, if we consider the deep and widespread misunderstanding that exists about the essential nature of religion. The basis of religion lies ultimately in the belief that behind all phenomena is a Being who is in nature not less complex than the most perfect known example of human personality, and who is the source and superlative expression of all personal life, no matter how rudimentary. He is perhaps super-personal, but He is emphatically not sub-personal. He is not blind and

purposeless, but fundamentally trustworthy. The spirit and purpose of this Being manifest themselves in the upward trend of the external world, and it is therefore in no way surprising if there should be found in that world suggestions and forecasts of things which only become fully developed in the kingdom of man. The reason for confining the term "person" to beings who are at least human rests upon the axiom that a truly personal being is always, and first of all, to be regarded as an end.¹ In our experience personal beings appear in existence as centres of value or as living central points in which value can be felt and acknowledged, and the valuation of phenomena by human personality is held to have cosmic and eternal significance. It is worthy of note, however, that the valuation of animal life has been enhanced rather than depreciated by developing thought. The conception of animals solely as means to an end (beasts that perish), and therefore not worthy of consideration, has weakened in recent times. The oriental pantheism which will not even kill vermin has it is true found few supporters in the west, but there has certainly been a disposition to insist on the kind treatment of domestic animals, and even to credit the higher species of these with the possession of some imperishable element which survives death.²

Nevertheless the broad distinction seems unlikely

¹ See Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*.

² Note also the conception of the totem animal among primitive peoples, and of animal gods such as the Japanese fox-god, Hanuman the monkey-god of India, etc.

to be swept away, in which the individual human being claims under all circumstances to be treated as an end in himself. If an animal develops an incurable disease it is shot. Euthanasia for cancer in men and women finds a few advocates, but it can never be discussed apart from the value of human personality. Try as we will, there is a differentia that cannot be overridden between a veterinary surgeon engaged in patching up an injured horse and a specialist operating on some beloved wife or mother. Both the life of the horse and the life of the woman have a relative value, but it would be difficult to argue that the absolute value of each was equal. Yet the sparrow's fall is marked. Clearly there is need for balance and measured language in these matters. The end of the problem has not yet been reached, and the claims of the state in war time, and perhaps in some degree of the Church in missionary work, to subordinate the earthly existence and comfort of the individual to the welfare of the community, show that there are limits even to the absolute value of each single human life, though it may be argued that these claims rest upon a high conception of human personality and its destiny, and that personality is not the equivalent of mundane and bodily existence.

It will be assumed in these pages that that conception of religion is the right one in which it is regarded as the ultimate harmonious inter-relation of all the healthy elements of life in the universe with their Source and with one another,¹ and the

¹ M'Taggart, *op. cit.* p. 3.

sense of religion as the sense of that harmony, whether as actually existing at the moment or as capable of attainment. It will further be assumed that as we are here dealing only with the genus humanum, religion for the present discussion means the personal relationship between the members of that genus and their Head and Source "of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named."

Anyone who has tried to follow the argument up to this point must have felt that one whole element of the known world has so far been omitted from consideration, *i.e.* matter. I admit this, and I also admit that the omission has been deliberate. It is possible to deny the existence of a Personal Deity and yet to believe in finite persons, and it is also possible to deny the existence of matter and to believe in spiritual consciousness. It is therefore much more important to begin with an affirmation of personality than to begin with an affirmation of the material nature of the environment in which that personality exercises itself. To the materialistic monist, personality as a spiritual entity does not exist, and it is difficult for him to make any sense of the peculiar spiritual faculties which human creatures undeniably have possessed and still possess. The spiritualistic monist, on the other hand, is simply an idealist for whom matter is merely a form of spirit which is in process of sublimation. It will be assumed however in this argument that spiritual personality has some environment at any rate which is as distinct from itself as object is from subject, which is perhaps the product and expression of

spiritual personality, and which is the medium in which personality, both finite and infinite, exercises its relationships. It will further be assumed that this environment is capable of being controlled by spiritual personality, and that the degree, nature, and extent of that control are still but incompletely understood by human investigators, so that while no doctrine can be built upon the details in that control of which we as yet know so little, it is certainly an integral part of our faith that personality is or can be superior to its environment, and no one dare call himself a Personalist, or a fortiori a Christian, who denies this fact, whatever he may privately think about the terms in which different generations have chosen to express it.

We pass on to consider the evidence of religious phenomena.

The patient scientific tabulation of materials for the study of religion which has been going on for at least the last half century has shown what a very high value, even among primitive peoples, is set upon that invisible factor which we call personality. The universe as conceived by uncultured animists is essentially a personalistic universe. It is true that spiritual personality is in a childlike fashion ascribed to a great many inanimate objects, such as rivers, mountains, and rocks, and that the spirits with which the earth of the child-races abounds are sometimes capricious and seldom of a high moral tone, as often inhuman as they are angelic, and that these defects have led some authorities to regard the lower animistic religions

as the results of a retrogression from such lofty forms of monotheism as that for instance connected with the Chinese Altar of Heaven. But this does not overthrow the fact that to the animist spiritual personality is the decisive factor in the world. Moreover, animism of a sort is current among civilised peoples. The cult of ghosts and spirits lies equally at the back of Chinese ancestor-worship and of present-day spiritualism, while it is safe to say that the erection of shrines and statues to local or national heroes, and their adornment with flowers, is not merely an effort to rescue past deeds from oblivion, but also a standing witness to a common though inarticulate conviction that the personalities of those commemorated are immortal and able consciously to appreciate the tribute paid to them. Writers like Fechner and Maeterlinck are inclined to lead us back to the possibility that many apparently inanimate objects do possess some kind of spiritual personality, and we must take their opinions into account even though we may disagree with them, while at least one English philosopher ¹ of the present day has been led, while denying the existence of a Supreme Personal Deity, to declare that the total aggregate of all finite spiritual personalities is the whole of reality, and that nothing else exists. Other metaphysicians refer to human personalities as whirlpools or self-conscious nuclei in the universal consciousness of the Supreme Being, or declare that God stands to individual persons as the cathedral does to the individual stones which

¹ M'Taggart, *op. cit.*

compose it, *i.e.* He is no more a mere aggregate of souls than the cathedral is a mere collection of stones: each as a spiritual entity is more than a mere synthesis of parts. Metaphysics of this kind serves as a bridge linking up multipersonalism with theism of the more definitely transcendental type.

The evidence of comparative religion does not however end with multipersonal animism. Its discovery and comparison of the widespread and rich varieties of theism has commanded the attention of all scientific minds, and has led to such common-places as "Man is a religious animal," "Man is incurably religious," and the like. It is possible that such schemes of interpretation as those to be found in Flint's *Theism* or the Gifford Lectures of Caird may not hold their ground to-day without some modification, but it is usually supposed that scientific research has confirmed the famous saying of Augustine, "*inquietum est cor nostrum*, etc.," and that all normal people have as part of their birth-equipment a god-sense which is capable of development.

The present writer feels justified in accepting this conclusion, provided that it is fortified by certain qualifications.

1. In the first place it is only fair to admit that the god-consciousness in the majority of persons is not very strong, but is later than other faculties in development; that as a natural endowment it is stronger in women than in men; and that like many of the higher and perhaps as we should say more refined faculties, it is easily stunted, and needs

to be very carefully drawn out and trained. Few individuals will be found wholly defective, but just as we find freakish instances of colour-blindness or the absence of any ear for music, so there occur some whose atheism seems congenital. Such persons however are rare, like albinos, and it is remarkable that just as the blind person has by way of compensation an enhanced sensitiveness of touch, so a heightened sense of moral obligation and regard for conduct often characterises those whose sense of a Personal God is through no fault of their own absent or dim. It is more often the case that the apparent atheist is a sad instance of sheer conscious opposition to God. He is as the devils who believe intensely but tremble. In others the god-consciousness has suffered atrophy or perversion. In both these latter cases the sense of moral obligation is low.

It follows that the great majority of normal folk, in certain races at any rate, are listless as far as the development of the god-consciousness is concerned, unless something occurs to arouse their interest in it.¹ Among such the average individual assumes the existence of God, but does not seek to open up relations with Him. Many Chinese are said to be of this type, and we shall all admit no doubt that it is a common one among Anglo-Saxons.

It is probable that the conditions under which life is lived affect to some extent the capacity of the individual to practise the religious relationship.

¹ Cf. Dudley Kidd, *Savage Childhood*, on the listlessness of Kafirs with regard to spirits.

Generalisations in this matter are apt to prove both difficult and dangerous. Thus, for instance, a high birth-rate and a crowded population, involving a fiercer struggle for existence, do not invariably dim the god-sense, as is evident from the cases of Russia before the revolution, and India as she stands to-day with her great mass movements of out-castes.

On the other hand, the discontented city populations of western Europe have to some extent lost their perception of the Divine. It is difficult to see how a people bred among collieries and blast furnaces, and living in the smoke-begrimed barracks of a northern industrial town, can retain any very keen spiritual concepts. Yet it is remarkable that as long ago at any rate as the days of George Eliot it was found that there was a certain deadness to religion in country districts as compared with the enthusiasm of the wretched factory hands.¹ Probably parallels to this could be found to-day, and even if the plea be urged that a doctrine of salvation will always find a readier acceptance among persons of miserable social circumstances than among those whose lot is cast in pleasant places,² it is safe to predict that there is a fair distribution of indifference due to a variety of causes both in town and country.

2. The second qualification follows naturally from the first. Since the range of the human mind is limited, it is quite possible for many persons to be so much absorbed in one particular function or view of existence as to have no leisure for other

¹ *Adam Bede*, chap. viii.

² Wells, *Outline*, p. 337.

things. Not only is it the case that "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life choke the word." Perfectly sincere and well-disposed people are quite often hindered by their habitual occupations from cultivating faculties which lie outside the sphere of those occupations.

It is probably true that there are certain conditions of existence which make it possible in the Greek sense to live "a good life," which also provide scope for the development of the religious consciousness.

It is plain that the omnibus conductor, whose working hours were so long that he never saw his children except when they were asleep in bed, was not in a position to develop his family relationships, and it is therefore not surprising that he also found it impossible to develop his religious relationship. The essentially protestant view that "a good life" in the religious sense must be productive is rightly regarded as one of the main sources of modern industrialism. As a guide for life it has broken down, because when applied unreservedly it has led as we see on the one hand, to the accumulation of huge private fortunes and the exploiting of labour, and, on the other, to the production of many things which are not genuinely useful, and also ultimately to over-production. The catholic conception of life, which emphasises *being* rather than *doing* has this much of right on its side that it has always recognised the supreme duty of man to produce character. Severely as it has been criticised for its barrenness and its cult of the negative virtues, it has always

condemned the acquisition of material wealth as an end, but has been content to combat it, not by revolutionary economics so much as by insisting upon the right of all catholics to have room for the maintenance of a supernatural relationship. The conclusion of the matter would appear to be that (i) "a good life" should be a possibility secured to every individual; (ii) that the fundamental basis of such a life is to be found in the development of the creative faculties of the individual rather than in the stimulation of his acquisitive tendencies; (iii) that in production a character of positive virtue¹ is immeasurably more important than material objects of wealth; (iv) that such character must involve a properly balanced development of all social relationships, including the religious. From these principles it may be clearly seen that while salvation from wretched social conditions as a gospel will attract many whose religious relationship is really meagrely developed, and while salvation from sin is welcomed by sick souls as a remedy for pathological conditions, the happy and harmonious development of relationship with the Divine is most likely to ensue from just those conditions which give room for all other relationships, *i.e.* a community of well-governed families living frugally and in moderate comfort, with no fierce or unwholesome competition, yet with no such inordinate accumulation of capital as to tempt any to idleness

¹ Such, for instance, as the famous "fruits of the Spirit," *i.e.* Love, joy, peace, kindness, benevolence, good faith, sweet-reasonableness, self-control.

or prolonged parasitism, and with such a spacing of population, and such hours of labour, as will leave room for the cultivation of the highest faculties and most fundamental relationships.

Such a construction of society may be derided as utopian, but it must be admitted that the nearest approach to "a good life" has occurred in those patches of the human race (at present unfortunately scattered and sporadic) where the social elements have reached so happy a state of equilibrium as to produce conditions of the kind described. How these exceptional conditions are to be made normal is a problem beyond the scope of this present chapter.¹

3. Allowance must be made for the presence of a certain number of people who tacitly or avowedly hold that religion is a state of mind (leading to conduct), which is coincident upon a sense of harmony either with an impersonal but real view of the universe, or with the universe itself conceived as an aggregate like a school, a country, or an empire, or with the other souls that go to make up the world-soul or the sum-total of distinct but sociable spiritual personalities in the universe. These people have dissolved the whole of religion as it would seem into a thrill.² Yet this statement hardly does all of them justice. It is probable that their number includes a great variety of individuals of many shades of opinion. It includes, for example,

¹ Some suggestions on this matter may be extracted from *Outspoken Essays* by the Dean of St. Paul's, Nos. iii. iv. x. and especially p. 103, or (on the other side) from the writings of Mr. G. H. Tawney and Mr. G. D. H. Cole.

² Thus, in Germany, Simmel reduces it to "Gefühl."

all those Confucians who, since they regard High Heaven as above their knowledge, hold religion to consist in the proper maintenance of a well-balanced system of human relationships, as well as the extremely indefinite class of people who say, "The world is my country, all men are my brothers, to do good is my religion." "Right relationships" and "doing good" produce, it is alleged, a sense of harmony which is equivalent to the so-called sense of communion with a personal god. A good many thinkers show sympathy with this belief, usually on account of a revulsion which they feel against the all too narrow presentation of the Divine as Personal. The obvious remedy for the latter is a true and careful statement of what is meant by the term "personal" as applied to God. Thus it is clear that if the attribute "personal" means that which possesses some elements of self-consciousness of being in one's self an end, and of being able to enter into relationships, then we do not mean, by saying that God is a Person, that His possession of these attributes bears any comparison to the extent to which they are possessed by human beings. What we mean is that God possesses those attributes to an extent than which no greater can be conceived. He is therefore as we may say super-personal, but this does not hinder, nay rather it enhances, the possibility of our communion with Him.¹ Between harmony with creation and

¹ For fuller treatment of this see the ancient treatise, *On the Divine Names*, attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, ed. C. E. Rolt.

harmony with a personal god there is moreover no contradiction. On the contrary, instances will occur to most of us which illustrate it. Relations of love or friendship for example between two human persons generally create in both a feeling that the world of nature is friendly and well disposed towards them. The lover's ecstasy creates harmony between him and the universe. The man who has received warm commendation from his employer sees the world through rose-coloured spectacles.

It is however objected by many of these persons of whom we are speaking that they have no consciousness of any personal god, and that they do not think that a new definition will provide them with a sense which they do not possess. There will probably be a good many people of this sort in the world in the near future, and while some of them will certainly fall to be considered in the later paragraphs of this chapter, those of them who insist on claiming the title "religious" for themselves must be dealt with here. I think the best way in which to approach such individuals is to counteract their one-sided intellectualism by an appeal to other sides of the truth. Thus one may represent to them that the logical outcome of the denial of the existence of a personal God is to make much of our experience of the universe meaningless or deceptive and therefore evil experience, since it is experience of phenomena whose natural interpretation lies in the assumption of the existence of a personal deity; and further, by pointing out that there is as good evidence (and as bad) for the

existence of a single Divine Person as there is for a multiplicity of finite persons. If God is not personal, our personalities as we conceive them may be an illusion. But if our personalities are real, it is difficult to deny the *fitness* at any rate of the existence of a super-Person. Moreover, if all men are my brothers, who is our common parent, and who decides what is meant by "to do good"? Either there is no common parent and no common standard of conduct, in which case the statement is foolishness, or else some kind of personalistic theism is implied as the basis of life.

The assertion is sometimes made, and I think it may be regarded as the fashionable theory, that the personal deity is the personification of the group-consciousness of the human community, and this is undoubtedly the dominant feature of the system of Professor Royce, who makes religion equivalent to loyalty to the community, of Durkheim,¹ who represents it as the consciousness by the individual of his responsibility to the community, and also of M. Loisy (on a strong nationalist basis) in his latest phase. It is difficult to believe that this interpretation of experience, valuable as in some respects it is, can be regarded as the final one. It is an extreme form of immanentism, and it is curiously vulnerable to the ancient gibe of Xenophanes that man like other animals probably invents gods resembling himself, since the group-interpretation simply reverses the well-worn maxim and says "Vox dei vox populi." Here we have the modern

¹ Also (in Germany) Johannes Schlaf.

democratic deity, who rules by what has been wittily described as "the divine right of kings standing on its head." As it is impossible to obtain a plebiscite of the human race, this kind of authority is nearly as bad as the appeal to a General Council of the Church which can never meet. One can no more bow the knee to this group-deity than to the despotic monarch of Calvin's invention. Both are marked with a date. The peculiar characteristic of the Christian definition of the Divine Character is that though presented historically it is timeless. Its God belongs not to political science but to life, nor is He solely associated with this planet.

4. It is necessary to deal with the difficulties of the idealistic philosopher with some considerable measure of care and respect. Thinkers like Biedermann in Germany and the late Archdeacon Wilberforce in England have felt that God stands for absolute Spirit, unlimited and unconditioned, while man on the other hand is limited and conditioned, and it may be that personality belongs to this limited state of existence and that to speak of God as personal is a mistake. Personality according to their definition is an individual spiritual ego. Does not an ego however involve limitation? And can we regard the Omnipresent, the Timeless, and the Sublime as an individual spiritual ego? Lotze gets over this difficulty by opposing, not the ego to the non-ego, but the ego in the making to the ego in perfection. Personality is not the negation, but the imperfection of Divinity. It has been said that if the highest happiness of the children of earth be

personality, then due measure of this happiness cannot be denied to God. In facing such a problem, some remarks made in a recent essay upon survival and immortality¹ are worth quoting. The writer is dealing with the objection that idealism offers us a merely impersonal immortality, and he says :

“What is personality? The notion of a world of spiritual atoms, ‘solida pollentia simplicitate,’ as Lucretius says, seems to be attractive to some minds. There are thinkers of repute who even picture the Deity as the constitutional President of a collegium of souls. This kind of pluralism is of course fundamentally incompatible with the pre-suppositions [of the writer]. The idea of the ‘self’ seems to me to be an arbitrary fixation of our average state of mind, a half-way house which belongs to no order of real existence.

“The conception of an abstract ego seems to involve three assumptions, none of which is true. The first is that there is a sharp line separating subject from object and from other subjects. The second is that the subject, thus sundered from the object, remains identical through time. The third is that this indiscerptible entity is in some mysterious way both myself and my property. In opposition to the first, I maintain that the foci of consciousness flow freely into each other even on the psychical plane, while in the eternal world there are probably no barriers at all. In opposition to the second, it is certain that the empirical self is by no means identical throughout, and that the spiritual life, in

¹ Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, pp. 274-276 ; also C. E. Rolt, *op. cit.*

which we may be said to attain real personality for the first time, is only 'ours' potentially. In opposition to the third, I repeat that the question whether it is 'my' soul that will live in the eternal world seems to have no meaning at all. In philosophy as in religion, we had better follow the advice of the *Theologia Germanica* and banish, as far as possible, the words 'me' and 'mine' from our vocabulary. For personality is not something given to start with. It does not belong to the world of claims and counter-claims in which we chiefly live. We must be willing to lose our soul on this level of experience before we can find it unto life eternal. Personality is a teleological fact; it is here in the making, elsewhere in fact and power. So in the case of our friends. The man whom we love is not the changing psycho-physical organism; it is the Christ in him that we love, the perfect man who is struggling into existence in his life and growth. If we ask what a man is, the answer may be either, 'He is what he loves,' or 'He is what he is worth.' The two are not very different. Thus I cannot agree with Keyserling, who in criticising this type of thought (with which, none the less, he has great sympathy) says that 'mysticism, whether it likes it or not, ends in an impersonal immortality.' For impersonality is a purely negative conception, like timelessness. What is negated in 'timelessness' is not the reality of the present, but the unreality of the past and future. So the 'impersonality' which is here (not without warrant from the mystics themselves) said to belong to eternal life is really

the liberation of the idea of personality. Personality is allowed to expand as far as it can, and only so can it come into its own. When Keyserling adds, 'The instinct of immortality really affirms that the individual is not ultimate,' I entirely agree with him.

"The question, however, is not whether in Heaven the circumference of the soul's life is indefinitely enlarged, but whether the centre remains. These centres are centres of consciousness; and consciousness apparently belongs to the world of will. It comes into existence when the will has some work to do. It is not conterminous with life; there is a life which is below consciousness, and there may be a life above consciousness, or what we mean by consciousness. We must remind ourselves that we are using a spatial metaphor when we speak of a centre of consciousness, and a temporal one when we ask about a continuing state of consciousness; and space and time do not belong to the eternal world. The question therefore needs to be transformed before any answer can be given to it. Spiritual life, we are justified in saying, must have a richness of content; it is, potentially at least, all-embracing. But this enhancement of life is exhibited not only in extension, but in intensity. Eternal life is no diffusion or dilution of personality, but its consummation. It seems certain that in such a state of existence individuality must be maintained. If every life in this world represents an unique purpose in the Divine mind, and if the end or meaning of soul-life, though striven for in time,

has both its source and its achievement in eternity, this, the value and reality of the individual life, must remain as a distinct fact in the spiritual world."

A careful study of this statement of belief should send us back to the thought of our own personality and of the Divine Personality refreshed and strengthened, and more fully alive to the very cautious way in which the terms "personality" and "religion" should be employed.¹

5. The last qualification to be made to the axiom "All men are religious" is that it must not be taken to imply too large a common basis for all religions. This is the error of many students of comparative religion, and peculiarly that of theosophists in recent times. It is largely due to the natural desire to find a tidy synthesis for religious phenomena, and not a little to that myth of the eighteenth century "natural religion," which if it can ever be said to have existed must have been something much more like the animism and fetichism of savages than anything else. There is no common

¹ Dr. Rashdall (*Church Quarterly Review*, April, 1920) in criticising Dr. Inge's essay, seems to overlook the last paragraph which I have quoted. He takes up the cudgels on behalf of Christian personalism against what he holds to be Dr. Inge's undue partiality for the philosophy of Mr. F. H. Bradley. This final paragraph, however, seems to act as a safeguard against the apparently uncompromising impersonalism of the preceding one. It reads almost like a contradiction, and shows that Dr. Inge does really recognise that there is a strong case against the extinction, diffusion, or dilution of the individual life in eternity. Dr. Rashdall endeavours to meet him by suggesting that the Absolute is equivalent to the whole of existence, *i.e.* Divine Personality + human personalities + their joint environment, and is therefore not properly to be regarded as a Personal Entity.

basis for all religion other than the definition given on page 21. Personalistic theism is a form of religion, albeit an important form, but it does not represent the whole of the phenomena claimed as religious. Its superiority to other forms admits I think of proof, but it is idle to pretend that it is as yet universal, even as a foundation for all religious truth. I believe that the religious consciousness is a divinely bestowed faculty, but I do not believe that those who possess it invariably use it to recognise or discover the giver.

It remains to deal with some serious objections which may be urged against the permanent survival of the religious consciousness in the world.

The argument is sometimes heard that it is steadily on the decline, and that a non-religious future awaits mankind.¹ Superficially this might seem to be the case. The recent revolution in Russia has enormously increased the area in Europe in which anti-clericalism and rationalism are prevalent. The educated classes of India and Japan are swayed by materialism and agnosticism. China has disestablished and disendowed her temple system, but is not making any mass movement towards Christian theism, however ready a minority of her people may be to accept it. There are not a few pessimists who contemplate the possibility of a future without religion, which after the dissolution of such a sublime power as Christianity will turn

¹ Cf. Troeltsch, *Zukunftsmöglichkeiten*, and the well-known treatise by M. Guyau, with the suggestive title, *L'Irréligion de l'Avenir*.

away completely from all religious metaphysic, seeing that the very highest and best has miscarried ; while others think that the disintegration of the religious basis of western society denotes perhaps the impending break-up of the whole of European civilisation, which cannot construct a new religious element, and yet is incapable of dispensing with one, and so succumbs to the law of the exhaustion of all civilisations.¹

It is good for us to look these grim questions in the face courageously, and I wish to give some reasons for thinking that we need not regard them as accurate forebodings of a *Götterdämmerung* ruthlessly sweeping down upon this unlucky planet.

1. In the first place many of those who to-day appear godless are obviously honest folk who, seeing that the term " God " has become so cheapened, vulgarised, and discredited, prefer to express their belief in His reality by using some other phrase, and who are possibly under the sway of some of the scruples dealt with in previous paragraphs.

2. A revolutionary change in the expression of religious truth is not the same as the disappearance of the belief in God. Popular religious phraseology

¹ Troeltsch, *Zukunftsmöglichkeiten*. Troeltsch himself is not shaken by the fear of the extinction of Christianity as a possible outlook. In the period immediately preceding the war he maintained that the Marxian world-view was in dissolution, that Haeckel's " ephemeral platitudes " were ready to vanish away, and that the teachings of Marx, Haeckel and Nietzsche were not likely to be able much longer to win support on any scale. Whether he has since then changed his opinions I am unable to say.

may alter, the institutional expression of corporate worship may alter, but the belief will still remain.

3. Clear faith belongs to the health of both individual and community, while indifference, agnosticism and superstition are pathological phenomena due to disturbance or decay. African savages can see no aesthetic value in flowers, while pagan antiquity was as ready to ignore the beauties of a landscape as modern industrialism is to destroy them. Yet it will not seriously be argued that the beauty of flowers and natural scenery is illusory. There exists evidence to show that the emphasis and importance attached to many of the higher elements of life have fluctuated greatly. Art and literature have known their periods of decadence and degradation. Musical genius has appeared and disappeared in nations with uncanny rapidity. The extinction of the Western Empire and the changes of the Renaissance and Reformation were accompanied by the destruction of many intellectual and spiritual landmarks. In almost every age there have arisen pathetic individuals who have cried: "They have taken away my Lord and I know not whom to adore," but the alarm of such persons has not been justified in subsequent experience. Even the Christians themselves were first called atheists by their pagan contemporaries. The anti-religious violence of revolutionaries is a kind of inversion of the natural god-consciousness. It is no more an argument against healthy religion than the ugly consequences of thwarted or perverted sexual

instincts as against healthy parenthood. No one who knows anything at all about the strange vagaries of the Slav temperament (dubbed neurasthenic by Troeltsch), or who has any acquaintance with the hybrid peculiarities of Russian heretical sects and who takes into account the Mongol occupation of Russia in the middle ages will feel any great surprise at the atrocities of the last two years.¹ With a few brilliant exceptions, such as the Patriarch of Moscow, the Russian clergy have earned from a countryman of theirs who is not himself a revolutionary the epithets "ignorant and unconsidered."² The official guardians of religion having thus failed in their task, it has been easy for Jewish atheists³ with bitter memories of pogroms rankling in their minds to unite with Marxian extremists in stirring an unlettered multitude against those who have

¹ Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, p. 89, gives two very suggestive sentences, the first from Dostoievsky, the second from Nietzsche.

"The Russian peasant may suddenly, after hoarding impressions for many years, abandon everything and go off to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage for his soul's salvation, or perhaps he will suddenly set fire to his native village—and perhaps do both. . . ."

"The Russians are volcanoes, either extinct, quiescent, or in eruption. Below the surface even of the quietest and stupidest lies a vein of racial energy, an access to the inner fire and mystery of the spirit of man. When the spirit moves in the depths, then the ways of the outward man seem strange. . . ."

² Those who have fraternised with the Russian Church have with curious prejudice merely seen what they wanted to see.

³ It is too often forgotten that from the days of Trypho, Jewish intellect has been a weighty factor in the scale against faith. Organised Christianity has been perilously negligent of its able antagonists and also extremely cruel. We do not suppose that M. Salomon Reinach is unmindful of the Dreyfus case.

aided and abetted in their persecution. At the time these words are written they are already beginning to admit their mistakes. A writer like Kautsky, in spite of his sympathies, is perfectly ready to criticise the Bolshevik attitude towards capital and its definition of "useful and productive work" as entitling to the franchise. English revolutions have been marked by the national love of moderation, but it will be remembered that we too have had our Levellers and "Sufferings of the clergy,"¹ while the riots and brawling which took place in the churches in the Tudor and Cromwellian² periods must have seemed quite as shocking to their custodians as the destruction of the ikons at Kiev. English religion however recovered its balance, and there is good hope that that of other countries will do the same. The truism that the great periods of change have invariably been followed by periods of building enables us to view the present situation with less anxiety, even though the wisest among us can hardly claim to predict with any accuracy the possible extent of the present movements. The god-consciousness lies deeper than any of its temporary expressions, and it will shortly be shown that the data of historical religion cannot merely be swept aside. The Divine purpose would seem to be to use man himself for the task of arousing his fellow-creatures to recognise and practise their

¹ See Sir Frederick Treves' *Highways and Byways in Dorset*, pp. 147-8, for an account of the mal-treatment of Archbishop Wake's grandfather; also the famous chronicle by Walker.

² The soldiers of the Parliament fired on the figure of Christ in Peterborough Cathedral and riddled it with bullets.

highest relationship and of stirring to life faculties hidden away within them, the use of which they have either neglected or forgotten. Whatever apathy exists is a challenge to effort rather than evidence for despair. The selfish introspective indifference of multitudes both in England and America hardly fits them to be critics of a standard of life which is too high and too hard to commend itself to their self-indulgence. Reaction after strain may be inevitable, but it is not a thing to be proud of.

4. The conflict between personalism and anti-personalistic monism is undoubtedly a serious one, since the public for the most part does its thinking by deputy and takes its tone from the behaviour of the intelligentsia. Yet this conflict is now seen to be issuing in a victory for personalism. The monism of Haeckel is probably bankrupt, and the monists of to-day pose as believers in some sort of Divine Immanence.

The position is given clearly by Troeltsch ; " Personalism stands over against the tendencies of monism as the faith in the attainable, eternal, and absolute worth of personality . . . in the anchorage of the ideal worth of personality to a Divine Being to whom it is related, and in the possibility of bringing that personality to fulfilment in fellowship with the life of the Divine Person. . . . It is the essential anti-rationalism, to which the existence of things is an incomprehensible wonder to be explained only by the controlling will of God, and to which every single actuality in spite of all connection

with the totality of things, is also an incomprehensible new creation and definite reality. For this very reason it is an optimism confident in its goal, which regards absolute worth as the final test of actuality, and its realisation through the merging of the creature into the divine scheme of creative activity as the final end and aim of a spiritual work which will outlast present bodily existence and free itself from its trammels. In virtue of this such a personalism can appropriate to itself the view of the eternity of matter, of the immeasurableness of the world, of the plurality of spiritual realms, of the association of all individual creations with the entire whole, and of the immanence of the Divine Creative Will in the world which streams towards it. . . . It is dualism in its only possible form, the dualism of God and the world, of the Absolute and the Relative, of the eternal aims of life and of the nature that uplifts itself towards them in freedom of effort. Suffering and sin belong to the world as it is. In that dualism they are to be overcome, and will certainly be defeated through the saving exaltation of the world into the fellowship of the Divine Spirit. . . . Against all this, modern thought has no single thorough-going ground of opposition. The monistic deduction from rationalism would only be justified if the interpretation of the world under rationalistic categories were the only one possible, and if it provided a really cleaner and more thorough-going and exhaustive interpretation of reality. As a matter of fact irrational ideas are as strongly represented in modern thought as rational ones. The

conception of law tends to become almost a mythological personification; while the belief that the test of the reality of an object should be held to be its mere conformity to rational standards, is nothing less than a gigantic piece of prejudice. . . . The actual difficulties lie not in the realm of thought so much as in practical experience. The subjection of nature, suffering, the brutish or half-brutish stupidity of millions of human souls, the foolishness, wickedness, and short-sightedness of human undertakings,—these are the actual primeval obstacles. No theory and no science can overcome them. On the contrary if a complete conquest of them is to be made, it will be exclusively through courageous faith issuing in practical life. . . . Whoever experiences the higher world of personalism is pledged to the conquest, and through no science can he be relieved from his pledge.”

It seems then that we may confidently look forward, not merely to the survival, but actually to the development of religion upon this planet, even if at this stage we are unable to predict the precise form it will take.

A further distinction needs now to be made. It is clear that the existence of the religious consciousness is not the same thing as its use, nor is the upward striving of the human spirit towards Divine communion the whole of the story of religious development. Such would indeed be the case if it were to be assumed that no Personal Deity existed, but only a multitude of finite personalities. But an assumption

of this kind as a basis for investigation fails to offer a satisfactory reading and explanation of the facts as they are unfolded, and I for one cannot accept it. *I take my stand with those who believe in a Personal God.*

This being the case, it is impossible to make the history of religion wholly anthropocentric. One might as easily hope to read a Shakespearean dialogue with one side of the conversation blocked out. The result would be a sort of missing-word competition, with no certainty of the gaps ever being supplied. *The responsiveness of God* must therefore be accepted as an axiom for the study of religion, and any survey of the religious experience of mankind must undertake to include not only the story of the strivings of men but also of the responsive acts of God. A healthy living relationship cannot be one-sided, but must involve the commerce and intercourse of spirits, and the accumulated religious experience of mankind must involve without a doubt experience not only of human prayers but of Divine unfoldings and revelations. Where can we look for such experiences of the Divine Person if not in (a) the record of the receptive consciousness of saints and prophets, (b) the record of human history? We must accept then the existence of Revelation, of Divine Responsiveness, of Divine Words and Divine Acts, as part of the phenomena of religion recorded in human experience.

The question seriously before us at present, however, is a deeper one. *Can there be any section of such experience which has an absolute value?* Is it

not incongruous with the rest of human experience for a single episode or career to be isolated and treated as of absolute and final authority? Must there not always be progress, always possibility of advance, always chances of fresh light, new revelations and fresh adaptations to ever-new conditions of being? Is there, or is there not, any contradiction between the view that the Person of Jesus stands *central* in the record of God's dealings with the human race, and the view that our knowledge and experience of the Divine Being is daily and for ever accumulating and advancing?

This is the problem which falls to be dealt with in the next chapter.

NOTE A.

ON LOSS OF EXPERIENCE AS A DANGER IMPENDING.

It has been pointed out lately on more than one occasion that the revolutionary overthrow of a class which has proved the unfaithful steward of civilised experience, however richly it may have been deserved, carries with it the peril of a serious loss to the entire community. In order to avoid this loss it is not necessary for any nation to suffer the continuance of an effete governing class. On the other hand, it is vitally necessary that those who bring about the revolution should wisely consider what good elements are enshrined within the system they seek to supersede. It is no credit to any body of reformers to ignore the treasures of literature and learning and the ripe experience of the past. The leaders of any change must at all costs restrain their followers from ignorantly destroying that which they have not learned to appreciate. More particularly is this the case where religion is concerned. The promotion of secular well-being and the improvement of material conditions, however necessary they may be,

still leave man, as Baron von Hügel says, " a land animal." ¹ The fostering of a spiritual relationship and of generous ideals, and the extension of man's powers of perception beyond material limits are, in ordinary circumstances, only possible on any wide scale as the result of great unbroken traditions of spiritual experience and mental training. To break with those traditions and to ignore that training is therefore shortsighted and in the highest degree unwise, and the leaders of the proletariat would do well to recognise this and to convince their followers of it, since by confusing spiritual religion (an important factor in progress) with a conventional cult (tending to blind conservatism) they will do harm to themselves, to their own friends and well-wishers, and to the high purpose of humanity.

Between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the capitalist I can see no useful distinction from the religious standpoint. In the one case the brown rat enslaves and perhaps exterminates the black rat. In the other the black rat exploits the brown rat because it pays him better than to exterminate the species. Call the basis of such a conflict pagan or evolutionist ethics, it matters little. There is no question here of any religious relationship. " We kill chickens, why not kill men ? " might just as well have been said by a pagan capitalist as by a Russian soldier. Add to this mental attitude the increased birth-rate in our large and ugly cities, the decay of an old governing class, and the rise in prices which inevitably follows all wars, and the danger of civil conflict is evident, where no religious motive exists to bind people together. In such a condition of society it is high time for the servants of God to cry " Sirs, ye are brethren. Why do ye this wrong one to another ? " Religion is *not* an opiate. It is the one fact which if accepted produces the greatest of all revolutions, that in which men have fellowship and love one towards another, not because they are all reduced to one species or pattern, but in spite of their differentiations. It is no more the will of God for the English to annihilate the Germans than for the proletariat to exterminate the bourgeois, or *vice versa*. The will of

¹ *Eternal Life*.

God imposes a harder and yet nobler task, that each should learn to esteem, understand, and help the other.

It is perhaps worth pointing out the curiously regular sequence in which certain phenomena recur in our history. In the fourteenth century we have a long and fruitless war between France and England followed by a devastating epidemic, and then social unrest, and anti-clerical riots, which prove so dangerous that the Church and the Crown unite in diverting the inconvenient attention of the populace once again to a French war. The fierce York and Lancaster strife which follows the disastrous ending of the French expeditions leaves the country impoverished and plague-stricken, and in the hands of a strong new set of rulers, who promptly attack organised religion and disestablish and disendow the monastic houses, while there is much rioting and destruction of church property. Finally, the strong government falls under foreign and unpopular influence and is overthrown by a revolution which sets up a creed calling itself Christian, yet as austere and unlovely as any socialistic monism. Once more there is plague, persecution of the organised church, and finally reaction into licentiousness. Man is in truth a very unpleasant kind of land-animal. All his best traits are the result of education. He has but a slender natural love of truth, beauty and goodness, and those who desire to serve him best need serve well the will of God, and reverently guard those human links which join the race in harmonious relation with its Divine Author. What has been rather provocatively called "the new barbarian invasion" needs to safeguard itself against the very dangerous nonsense talked about brain-workers. The directing brain is bound to be shielded, and while we ought all to welcome a wider scheme of liberal education, there seems no chance of any society being able to dispense with division of labour, unless everyone is to be an amateur or jack-of-all-trades, and a kind of general post is to be ordained at stated intervals. I have seen something of the sort operating in certain units in the army, but it is hard to believe that anyone contemplates it as a serious measure of social equalisation, and it produces very foolish consequences. The only thing to be done is to re-define useful labour in a sensible and

broad-minded fashion, and then adequately to preserve the brain-worker in a milieu where he can give of his best without the distractions of insecurity and physical discomfort. Otherwise we must go back to the conditions of the cave-man. All decent folk of whatever class will, however, be glad to see any system given a trial which will cause the disappearance of drones, lackeys, and harmful parasites.

NOTE B.

ON THE POSSIBLE EXTINCTION OF CHRISTIANITY OR OF SPIRITUAL RELIGION.

The question is sometimes asked : " Would the extinction of either or both at some future date prove them to have been based upon falsehood ? Would their decease mean that we who believed in them had been victims of an illusion ? " The best short answer to this is to be found in the exclamation of St. Paul, " Let God be true, and every man a liar." While I do not myself feel that the evidence goes in favour of such a probable calamity, I think one's faith ought to be strong enough to stand it. If we turn to the animal world we find that the stupid savagery of man has doomed to extinction many beautiful birds and antelopes which formerly abounded in parts of our planet. Once exterminated, they remain but a fleeting memory, and we do not expect to see them renewed. The ruthless destruction of a war helps us to realise how frail is the continuance of much that the human race might be expected to cherish with peculiar veneration as long as the world endures. A few high explosive shells, one or two air raids, and a fire,—and priceless treasures of genius, (whether an actual human brain, a work of art, a noble building, or a unique manuscript) may be reduced to nothingness, without the slightest hope of their ever being replaced. Man is still a foolish child, and in a fit of temper will smash anything regardless of its value. We must conclude then that as long as the human race remains free and self-determining, so long may it remain possible for a generation to arise which will be wholly apostate, and determined to reject

the highest spiritual truth, no matter how nobly and worthily presented to it. This argument has, I am well aware, been a favourite one with aristocratic reactionaries. There seems no reason, however, why they should have the monopoly of it. The rejection of Christ by the inhabitants of this earth, and the extermination of all true religion, may seem a calamity terrible beyond our power to conceive, but unless we are to ignore the sad experience of the past and deny the genuineness of man's capacity to act freely, we must, I think, leave it as a very real and possible danger, to be avoided with all our might and main.

CHAPTER II

OF THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ABSOLUTE RELIGION ALREADY EXISTING

LIFE has had three classes of interpreters. There have been those who believed in a golden age of remote antiquity from which the centuries trickled away in a slow process of deterioration. To such as these absolute perfection lay in the past and will perhaps never be seen again. Their interpretation was the basis of the belief in the "natural religion" of primitive man, conceived as a lofty monotheism of which Christianity was the republication. There have been in the second place those who looked forward to the future, believing that no past or present creations of any sort exhibited the perfected absolute. Both these classes of philosophers, the one essentially pre-Christian, the other vaunting itself as post-Christian, are lacking in due respect for the ascertainable facts of life. The third view, which lies between their two extremes may be described as the historical, and it is this which we are here seeking to justify.¹

¹ General reference may be made to the 1920 Romanes Lecture by Dr. Inge, and to the Appendix to Dr. R. H. Murray's *Erasmus*

There are undoubtedly a number of facts which seem to support the first interpretation. It is reasonably certain for instance that the solar system is like a clock which is running down. We do not expect it to stop in our own day, but its doom can hardly be denied. The heavenly bodies are cooling, and the material world as far as it concerns us, is slowly but relentlessly slipping downward to a dead level of inertia. It is also clear that history presents us with a surprising number of instances of deterioration and degeneracy. No sooner has some splendid and wonderful form of existence sprung into shape than it has proceeded to decay, and instead of moving on in orderly sequence to higher stages of development, has dwindled and finally in some cases died out altogether.

Until quite recently, however, there lay marshalled before the public an impressive mass of evidence in favour of the second or essentially modern view. The theory of the evolution of living creatures, according to the so-called laws of natural selection, seemed likely to be applied outside the sphere of zoology, and to be extended so as to explain the rise of all human institutions. Language, modes of government, art, and finally religion, were all approached with the preconceived notion that there was a desperately primitive form of them somewhere to be found in the depths of the past, and that they would attain to an inconceivably superb complexity somewhere in the unexplored future. This naïve

and Luther, both of which have appeared since this chapter was written.

application of a not very well attested theory has led to some ridiculous results. In the sphere of natural science it has been proved that the theory, while undoubtedly useful, is not a cast-iron one, but stands in need of submitting to frequent qualifications, while in other spheres it has largely broken down.

It is essential in the first place to distinguish between moral progress and growth in complexity. Progress, one need hardly point out, means movement toward a point or goal. Before we can speak of any progress therefore it is imperative that we should have some kind of goal in view. If infinite complexity be the goal of life, then it is plain that any increase in complexity is progress, but only progress in complexity. Thus a man who drives a bullock-wagon has to deal with a less complicated vehicle than the chauffeur who is in charge of the latest pattern of car, and it may well be that the brain of the latter has been trained to a higher degree of complex intelligence than the brain of the former. But it does not in the least follow from this that the chauffeur has advanced in moral goodness beyond the standard of the bullock-driver. On the contrary he is just as likely to have sunk far below it. One would feel inclined to offer an apology for pressing this obvious point were it not for the nonsense that is frequently talked about the word progress. It does not in the least follow that the citizens of a modern industrial metropolis are more able to live a better life than the simple inhabitants of an Indian or Japanese village, if by "better" is

meant morally better. It would be foolish to dispute the fact that *some* moral improvement has taken place since "the wild man of the woods" became a Christian communicant; but it would be highly dangerous to assert that the old goat-herd whom Mr. Robert Keable¹ met on the heights of Kilimanjaro was less assiduous in shaping his life after the pattern set by Christ than an English cathedral dignitary. It is hardly open to question, however, that if the human race is by Divine Purpose intended to avail itself of the fertility and mineral wealth of this planet the resulting complexity is not contrary of necessity to the Divine Will. One can not argue for instance that it is wrong for a bishop to hire a taxi-cab because such vehicles were unknown in the apostolic age. The subterranean stores of mineral oil and the ingenuity required to build a motor-engine are Divine gifts, but it is the use which the bishop in question makes of the liberty afforded him to hire taxi-cabs which ultimately determines whether he is as near to the divine perfection in human life as the apostle who wrote "I will not be a burden to you; for I seek not yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children: and I will most gladly spend and be spent out for your souls."

Similarly, the invention of aeroplanes and turbines is in itself a perfectly proper occupation for the intelligence with which certain persons have been endowed. It must be remembered, however, that

¹ *The Drift of Pinions.*

almost the whole of the complexity to be found in any great area of civilisation is and has been dependent upon the mineral resources available to its citizens. Metals and building stones it is true, although they slowly perish into dust and are degraded to the depths of scrap-heaps, are on the whole fairly durable. But this is not the case with fuel. It would probably have been quite impossible to work the factories of Sheffield and Birmingham and the mills of Lancashire merely by using charcoal, and if we had done so we should have stripped our country of its timber, and altered its climate for the worse. The time will come, though we shall not of course live to see it, when the coal and oil resources of the whole planet will have been dissipated, and although this may take many centuries, our present prodigal rate of expenditure is hardly calculated to retard the event. Long before this comes to pass the mineral supplies of our own island will have disappeared, and the survivors of our race, unless, (which is highly improbable) they are able to afford to import all that they need, will have had to return to a far simpler mode of living.

Are we to infer from this that their moral character will necessarily be inferior to that of English people to-day? It is certain that we cannot. The Dean of St. Paul's has pointed us to an interesting prediction: "London may yet be the spiritual capital of the world; while Asia—rich in all that gold can buy and guns can give, lord of lands and bodies, builder of railways and promulgator of police regulations, glorious in all material glories—postures,

complacent and obtuse, before a Europe content in the possession of all that matters."

It is probable that no thinker of the present day has devoted more attention to the idea of "progress" than Dr. Inge, and he has written his conclusions in a bold and sometimes provocative form. He points out that even the fact of progress is denied by such a recent thinker as Driesch, to whom progress is only by accumulation, and not by inner change. Man always remains the same, and his well-being depends on his gathering stores of knowledge which may be lost in the future, just as similar stores have been lost in the past. Dr. Inge continues: "Progress is neither necessary nor uniform. It is quite possible, though it would be a blow to my faith to have to believe it, that humanity may come to a stand, and live for the future in a fixed stationary condition, like the polities of bees and ants, which have a real civilisation, but apparently an absolutely unprogressive one. Variations, if they ever occur, must, in insect civilisation, be promptly eliminated. But in any case, there have been in the past real 'dark ages' of regression. It is certainly not true that each generation shows an advance upon its predecessor. For instance, the state of morals described by Gregory of Tours, even after the triumph of the Catholic Church, is quite appalling—much worse than the condition of Pagan antiquity. The history of religion, I regret to say, is seldom one of advance. We find sporadic efforts of genius, which for a time raise the tone of religious life and thought; and then a rapid declension to a lower life.

In Jewish history we see how the Church of the prophets sank into the Church of the chief priests and lawyers. The purity of the Apostolic Age was too soon lost. So were the reforms of St. Francis. Sir W. M. Ramsay, who is no prophet of pessimism, says in his book, *The Cities of St. Paul*, 'The history of religion among men is, with the rarest exceptions, a history of degeneration.' I venture to think this too strong, though there is too much justification for it. For, somehow or other, the general movement of the race is upward, not downward. Inspired prophets make good again the losses of institutional religion."¹

Dr. Inge is perhaps on less safe ground, when, in attacking the doctrine that the survival of the fittest is a law of nature, he contrasts the extinction of the super-animals with the preservation of parasitic vermin. It must surely be objected here that the spirit of man is divinely entrusted with the extermination of the syphilis and tubercle germs, and that the preservation of the latter is no indication that nature approves of them, but rather that she strongly disapproves of the disgusting habits of many of the human race. The real contrast is between the extinction of the extremely cumbersome and inconvenient brontosaurus and the survival and improvement in the breed of such agreeable creatures as the horse, dog and cow.²

It is equally true that institutional religion exhibits instances of the survival of the toughest

¹ *The Church and the Age*, ch. iii.

² See, however, chap. i. note 2.

and most vulgar types of devotionism, artificial unctuousness on the one hand, and obscurantist magic on the other. It seems odd at first sight that such perversions of the spirit of religion should be able so easily to maintain themselves, but when we reflect that they appeal to the weaker and more widely distributed elements in human nature, and accept them without trying to improve them away, our wonder ceases, though not our discontent and our determination to combat such types. There is a great deal to be said in favour of Calvin's remark (*Inst.* Bk. I. ch. 3): "I do not say with Cicero that errors wear out by age, and that religion increases and grows better day by day. For the world labours . . . as much as it can to shake off all knowledge of God, and corrupts His worship in innumerable ways," and of the traveller's verdict, quoted by Emerson (*Essay on Worship*) "I have seen human nature in all its forms. It is everywhere the same, but the wilder it is, the more virtuous"; though the judgment of the latter is the more open to criticism.

No one will suspect Prof. J. B. Bury of any prejudice in favour of Christian Theology, and it is therefore interesting to compare his analysis of the idea of progress with that arrived at by Dr. Inge and those who associate themselves with him. Prof. Bury is a philosophic historian, and his purpose is to trace the history of human thought in one particular aspect rather than to express his own convictions. Greek thought, he says, maintained opposite extremes either of optimism or pessimism.

If optimistic, it regarded humanity as having reached its highest stage of development in the city-state of the day. If pessimistic, it treated humanity as a mere cog in the wheel of destiny, revolving in an unknown direction and for an unknown purpose. To the medieval theologians man's future lay in another world. His tendency therefore in the present world was to them a matter of comparative indifference. The Renaissance, while it destroyed the geocentric theory of the universe, brought in a period in which man was taught to seek and to find his good in the enjoyment of terrestrial life. The gradual development of physical science held out hopes of a great future increase of knowledge, and with the end of the eighteenth century and the re-settlement of Europe after the battle of Waterloo, the world seemed growing a better and better place to live in. Then came Darwinianism, whose main thesis may be summed up in the assertion that the history of the world is one of continuous development towards a goal indeterminable by men in any generation preceding it. In conclusion, Prof. Bury regards it as an open question whether the latter idea of progress may not prove to be an ephemeral one, giving place in due course to other ideas more closely adapted to changed conditions.

It is now time to consider the next point in the problem of human progress, *i.e.* the sudden development of human achievements, moral and material alike.¹ We are apt to forget:—

¹ See appendix with figures, p. 72.

1. That conscious life is little more than a brief episode in the career of any planet.

2. The enormous contrast between the estimated age of the earth, dating from the time of its separate existence, and the number of centuries that elapse before we have any certain evidence of living organisms existing upon it at all.

3. The enormous gap between the earliest estimated date at which life began to show itself, and the appearance of creatures remotely resembling men.

4. The equally enormous length of the period during which creatures that would pass as human are believed to have existed, compared with the period during which men have settled upon an area continuously cultivated and possessed, and have lived in buildings continuously inhabited.

These considerations make it quite clear that all the greatest achievements of the spirit of man, as well as all his worst crimes, belong to a tiny fraction of his career as a sentient being. Human history is in fact very much like a journey pursued over a great plain, perhaps slightly undulating and with a very slight upward incline, but to all intents and purposes a plain, ending however in an immense group of mountain peaks reaching to the heavens, interspersed with deep valleys, some of which go down below the level of the original plain. History has not yet reached the end of this mountainous region, and it remains to be seen whether the future of the race will not lie upon another plain, perhaps a plateau lying at an altitude somewhere equivalent to that of the topmost peak.

The natural consequence of this bird's eye view of human life is to bring together the divers achievements of the spirit of man and to diminish the apparent distance between the thinkers of the past and the present. It is for instance on this showing easy to see why Matthew Arnold found in the Homeric writings something of the clearness and shrewdness of Voltaire, and why a modern scholar such as Mr. Glover can say "There is nothing archaic about Plato or Virgil or Paul—to keep abreast of their thinking is no easy task for the strongest of our brains, so modern, eternal and original they are. They have shaped the thinking of the world and are still shaping it." ¹

It is usual to say that the greatest sculptors lived much more than two thousand years ago, and to point to the Italian painters as giving us the canons of pictorial art, while to the Romans we attribute the fixation and definition of the principles of law and government, and to the Western Europeans of the nineteenth century the application of science to industry, while perhaps Germany may still keep the credit of having produced most of the great musical geniuses. Whether India in the realm of speculative metaphysics has yet made her great and final contribution may, one supposes, still be argued, and it would be fairly safe to say that the contributions of China and Japan have been respectively filial piety and bushido or loyalty. These choice flowerings of the human spirit touched by the Divine Spirit are, however, not affected in value by being

¹ Glover, *Jesus of History*, p. 22.

ranged in an order other than chronological. So close together in actuality do they come that they are like a cluster of blossoms each on its separate stalk, yet closely united by springing from one parent stem. To keep the original metaphor, the mountain peaks cluster close together. We speak of two thousand years, but what are two thousand years out of the ten thousand years of human civilisation, and out of the one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand years of mere stagnant human existence which seem to have preceded them ?

There is, therefore, it would appear, no inherent objection to the belief that two thousand years ago the spirit of the ages produced a unique human being, who in the words of Augustine "Summed up in Himself the long series of human life"; nor need we shrink from having recourse to the ethical ideals of such a person in order to find a pattern for life. Taken by itself there can be no force in the objection that it is impossible for essential and decisive spiritual truth to have been vouchsafed to the human spirit nearly two thousand years ago, because the people of that age believed in magic and superstition, and because we ourselves live two thousand years later. Belief in magic and superstition prevails widely to-day, and therefore in so far as it is prevalent, disqualifies this age also from being the recipient of spiritual truth, while with the new prospects which the discovery of radio-activity and the possible yoking to service of atomic energy hold out for the future of the human race, it is just as possible for a final revelation of Divine Character to be apprehended

eight or nine thousand years ahead as it is in this generation, and even that would only be a mere eleven thousand years from the birth of Christ, and therefore in the record of human progress quite a short distance.

Readers of Professor Taylor's essay on *Immortality*, published in 1915¹, will remember the melancholy charm with which he describes the probable decay of life upon this earth, only to be compared with the dwindling away of a great river into a meagre and vanishing stream amid the sands of eternity. There is indeed no reason for supposing that the great achievements of the spirit of man, the *gesta Dei per genus humanum*, however much they may tend to resemble one another, will ever repeat themselves. It is also conceivable that just as bees and ants have perfected their organisation, and breeds of men and animals have emerged and remained constant, so the religious development of mankind might establish itself and remain constant upon a certain level. This argument will be found repeated in a later chapter,² but it is inserted here in order to give completeness to this discussion. Another line of thought reminds us that the establishment or discovery of the main guiding principles or axioms which govern human existence and human intelligence on this planet need not necessarily be postponed to the later stages of its career. In fact it would be rather a sign of the irrationality of the universe if that proved to be the case; for to allow mankind to struggle upward to the painful attainment of

¹ *The Faith and the War*. MacMillan.

² Ch. 5.

beneficent truth, and then immediately to dissolve the sphere in which it is capable of applying that truth, would seem the work of an evil intelligence, if not the blundering of a blind force. Those who deny the existence of any deity and who regard the history of man as the history of his martyrdom, in which he witnesses not to any Saviour but to the vanity of human wishes, have undoubtedly a right to their opinion, but it is difficult to see with what kind of society they can consistently identify themselves other than with that of a community of Oriental ascetics. Even if a martyrdom of individuals promoted the intellectual advance of the human race, there would still be the dismal prospect ahead of the decay of that race, since without the values of religion there is no more excuse for believing in racial than in personal immortality. There is no reason for the philosophic atheist to believe that the human race will live happy ever after, at the expense of individual tragedies. If there is tragedy, we are all involved in it, and there is no hope, even for our remote descendants ; and if the world is coming to an end some day it is almost as tragic to conceive of a Divine Creator allowing his creatures to discover the secret of " a good life " when the sands of time are almost run, as to picture the human race struggling unaided to the same secret, to perish in the enjoyment of it.

It is quite reasonable to say, as Mr. Wells does, " Like all other human matters, religion has grown. . . . Religion is something that has grown up with and through human association, and God has been

and is still being discovered by man.”¹ But the possibility of such continued discovery in no way precludes the possibility of a definite and absolute bestowal and acceptance of truth in the past. Though we are still discovering truths in art, we go back to the great masterpieces for guidance. Discoveries are still being made in the forming of constitutions and government, but China in spite of her age-long civilisation has turned to the Anglo-Saxon races for a model of parliamentary procedure, and has sent her sons to Oxford to study Roman law and political philosophy.

It is therefore quite in harmony with the general facts of life that we should find it asserted by certain persons of obvious sincerity that there is a body of Truth centred upon and displayed in a particular human being which is of the nature of a guide to all who desire that religion should be an element in every healthy human life, and who accept the argument of our first chapter.

I cannot entirely agree with Miss Jane Harrison in her Darwin Anniversary Essay, where she says: “It is by thinking of religion in the light of evolution, not as a revelation given, not as a *réalité faite*, but as a process, and it is only so, I think, that we attain to a spirit of real patience and tolerance.” The statement is helpful, but it collides, if pressed too far, with a certain undeniable series of facts, which are too often ignored or undervalued.

The concept of deity may indeed show signs of development, but just as genius skips whole stages

¹ *The Outline of History*, p. 77.

of mathematical research, and what in biology are called "sports" jump whole stages of physical evolution and suddenly arrive at something rich and strange, so the religious consciousness may, under Divine guidance, jump whole stages of development and arrive independently at conclusions which ordinary mortals may never reach, or if they do, only after long and painful periods of seeking and adventuring.

The aim of this chapter has not been in any way to make out a case for Christianity. We have contented ourselves with considering what reasons there are which render it probable that in the development of the relations between God and man there might arrive a point at which a body of truth of supreme and absolute importance for the happiness of those relations came into existence, a point also at which the Divine Personality, never inactive either before or since, acted in a unique way as far as man's spiritual life was concerned. We have seen that there are numerous reasons why such an event, if it were alleged to have taken place, might be regarded not as something foreign to the nature of the external world as we know it, but as in perfect harmony with its general scheme, or at any rate not incongruous with it.

Such an allegation meets us in the Christian religion, and it will be our duty in the chapters which follow to consider

(1) The traditional valuation of Christianity.

(2) The arguments based upon its extent, appeal, and achievements.

(3) Its relation to Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.

(4) The re-statements of its claim to absoluteness which have been called forth by the more recent changes in our conception of the universe.

(5) A criticism of these attempts at re-statement.

(6) Attempts at new religious inventions, whether by a new synthesis of old beliefs, or an entirely new outlook, or by the cult of an adventurous spirit, which alleges the superfluousness of absolute religious truth, and says that every man must invent his religion for himself.

(7) Some attempt at positive reconstruction, with a survey of its consequences.

APPROXIMATE DATES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE EARTH

AS GIVEN IN MR. WELLS' *Outline of History*.

1. *The age of the earth's oldest rocks.*

Huxley	-	-	400,000,000 years.
Lord Kelvin	-	-	25,000,000 years.
Osborne	-	-	100,000,000 years.

N.B.—More than half of the whole of geological time had passed before life had developed to the later Palaeozoic level.

2. *Approximate dates.*

Azoic or Archaeozoic,	}	800 or 80 million years ago.	
possibly without life at all.		600 or 60	" "
Lowest forms of life, animal- culae, etc.	}	360 or 36	
Early Palaeozoic. No verte- brate animals.		" "	
Later Palaeozoic. Fishes, Amphibia, and Swamp animals.	}	260 or 26	
Mesozoic. Reptiles.		140 or 14	" "
Cainozoic. Mammals, Grass and Land, Forests.	}	40 or 4	
		" "	

The Cainozoic Age divided for convenience by geologists into :

	Eocene	dawn of recent life.
	Oligocene,	little of recent life.
	Miocene,	recent life in a minority.
	Pliocene,	more living than extinct species.
600,000 B.C.	}	Pleistocene. { Earliest man somewhere here. Great majority of living species.
to		
550,000 B.C.	}	First Glacial age.
500,000 B.C.		
400,000 B.C.	}	Second Glacial age.
250,000 B.C.		
250,000 B.C.	}	Second Interglacial period.
150,000 B.C.		
150,000 B.C.	}	Third Glacial age.
100,000 B.C.		
100,000 B.C.	}	Third Interglacial period.
50,000 B.C.		
50,000 B.C.	}	Fourth Glacial age. Neanderthal man.
35,000 B.C.		
35,000 B.C.	}	Late Palaeolithic. Increasing multitude of remains of true man.
15,000 B.C.		
15,000 B.C. to 1920 A.D.	Age of Cultivation—Historical Period.	

Thus the whole duration of recorded history from earliest Egypt to our own day is merely a section of the last division, while for more than half of the world's age there are no certain evidences of life at all.

N.B.—I have ventured to base my table on Mr. Wells' statements, since it is to be presumed that he and Professor Ray Lankester used the best and most recent authorities in compiling their own list.

CHAPTER III

THE TRADITIONAL VALUATION OF CHRISTIANITY

It is not my intention to make at this point any relative estimate of the value of the Christian position. Before we come to that we must first have clearly in our minds the nature of the claim that Christianity has always made. The remark will be found quoted elsewhere that "all religions are born absolute." Only in a certain sense is this true. A national god, for instance, is only "absolute" as god for the nation which is under his tutelage. He is not "absolute" to other nations. It is true that an unlimited absoluteness characterises all the great "founded" or "prophetic" religions. I hope to show, however, that, taken from every point of view, the demands of Christianity have always exceeded those of the others in their uncompromising assertion of the right to absolute sovereignty, while the chain of corporate experience which precedes them and also binds them into a whole must either be taken seriously as a real contribution to spiritual truth, or else treated equally seriously as most dangerous nonsense. If, however, we regard it as

nonsense, then it must be asked, "What religious experience in the Universe may not prove to be nonsense as well? Is not the whole Universe on that hypothesis a fraud—an evil nightmare?"

The traditional claim of Christianity is "respect for history": it has inherited the distinctive feature of Jewish faith, *i.e.* its historical and teleological character. A recent writer has well said: ¹ "The God of the Jew is not natural law. . . . The whole of history is an unfolding of the divine purpose, and so history as a whole has for the Jew an importance which it never had for a Greek thinker, nor for the Hellenised Jew, Philo. The Hebrew idea of God is dynamic and ethical; it is therefore rooted in the idea of Time." The Christian holds that there is every reason for believing that the Eternal has manifested Himself in Time, and that a single historical career may be the experience and equivalent of Divine Truth and Divine Character. The nature of this claim stands then next in order to be examined.

We begin with Hebrew experience, partly for the reason given above, but also for the reason that no honest student of Christian origins can deny, when the evidence is put before him, that Jesus of Nazareth made no attempt to inflict a schism upon the Jewish church or to substitute a new one for it. He came not to destroy but to fulfil. There is no real break between the Jewish ecclesia and the Christian ecclesia. The latter is regarded as the natural and legitimate development of the former. The Israel that rejects is no true ecclesia, but is ruled out of the

¹ Inge, *Essays*, p. 215.

line of development as much as the mass of Jews who did not trouble to avail themselves of the permission to return from Babylon, but were content to mingle themselves with the nations and learn their works.

It is therefore proper to enquire what notions of absoluteness are to be found in the Hebrew religion, and whether they tend to develop during the course of its history.

It may be argued that no one to-day doubts the universalist outlook of Christianity. I think it better however, not to take this for granted in such an argument as we are engaged in, but to try to build up our case as we go along. The documentary evidence of the Bible has been much misused, and I do not know even any recent literature which covers the ground quite in the way I want to cover it.

Opinions will always differ as to the historical nature of the messianic passages in Genesis. Many will feel that the dating of the documents we possess has made it difficult to find any sure evidence of a world-wide outlook earlier than in the writings of Amos, and that the view of the future implied in Genesis 12³ is a reading back of late-developed ideas into the patriarchal period. It is probable, however, that there were always two grades of vision among the Hebrews, the prophetic and the popular,¹ and that the former from the beginning had intuitions of the universal significance of their tiny nation. Such intuitions may for centuries have been dim,

¹ And even two grades of prophetic belief, as represented in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

but we can well believe them to have been the guiding star of such leaders as Moses and Samuel.¹ If the writings of Amos mark, as would seem, a substantial advance in the identification of Jahveh with the God of the whole earth,² there is nothing repugnant in supposing that wise and holy spirits at the same period began to look back over the records of their past national vicissitudes and to read them in the light of the newer teaching. And as they did so, it is not unfair to assume that those early records would for them take on a new aspect, and shine with a grander light, and many of the incidents related in them be felt to indicate a deep and long wrought-out purpose.

The conflict of prophetic and popular ideals remains uncertain in its ultimate issue until the return from Babylon, and the establishment of the second Temple. Even then the victory is rather of spiritual religion over idolatry than of universalist over nationalist views. Right up to the time of Jesus and His disciples it is needful to judge Judaism by its best rather than its worst and most worldly exponents, and such a judgment leads inevitably to the conclusion that the best Jews believed that their nation was entrusted with a spiritual mission to bless the whole world, that this blessing would come through the setting up of a "kingdom of the heavens" by a transcendental personage born of their race, and that their sacred books abounded in

¹ Even though we query their historicity. Great ideas often appear at a much earlier date than one might expect.

² Amos i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13; ii. 1; ix. 7.

passages in which this splendid event was promised and foreshadowed.

Putting this in other words, we may say if we like that the literature of the Hebrew nation richly illustrates the belief that out of the Hebrew national faith would grow an absolute and universal religion, out of the Jewish Church a Catholic Church, and that the inauguration of the change would be connected with the heroic career of the Messiah.

The mere face-value of the universalist passages in Hebrew literature is so extraordinary that it seems worth while to go rapidly through them in order. It must be insisted that in doing so we are not committing ourselves to any theory of inspiration or belief in second-sight or clairvoyance, but merely putting side by side the extracts which relate to the belief, and upon which the hopes and imagination of the pious Jew were fed. The passages are given in the order of the English Bible, which is of course not chronological. The reader will be able to some extent to date them for himself from a glance at the Appendix or at any good Bible dictionary, but it must be remembered that such dating is not infallible, and that it probably never entered into the calculations of those who read the scriptures in the time of Christ.

In the first place the very cosmogony of Genesis identifies the national Hebrew God Jahveh, with the God who in the beginning created the Heavens and the earth. It follows that the compiler of the book identified in his own mind the cult of Jahveh in whatever form it might ultimately issue, with the

worship of the Supreme Being, the Deity of the whole universe. Such a naïve identification may have in the first instance been no more than the belief of a primitive savage who thinks there is no world at all outside his own bit of jungle. But the literary form of the Pentateuch is certainly not that of the primitive savage, but at the very least, of people who knew of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, and the over-seas territories with which Solomon traded; while the Rabbis of the first century of our era were well acquainted with the existence of the Graeco-Roman world.

The whole structure of these early chapters of Genesis is obviously an attempt to show that in any general view of the races inhabiting this planet, the Hebrew race must be credited with a unique and peculiar vocation.

It will be quite enough, without any further comment, to quote such passages as Gen. 12³, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed (or bless themselves)," and Gen. 22¹⁸, the blessing of Jacob, Gen. 27²⁹, "Let peoples serve thee and nations bow down to thee," and Gen. 28¹⁴, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The story of Joseph cannot mean anything else than that the god worshipped by the Hebrew Joseph is the moral governor of the Egyptian world as well as of Palestine, just as in the story of Noah he appears as the moral governor of the whole planet. However much the record may be a patchwork of different sources, the essential truth is in the foreground, Gen. 39^{2, 3, 5, 21, 23}, *i.e.* that

Jahveh was with Joseph and that when his brethren plotted against him for evil, the god of his fathers turned it to good account "to save much people alive."

We get a glimpse of the transcendental Messiah in Gen. 49¹⁰ and also perhaps Numbers 24¹⁷, and we read in the former passage that "unto Him shall the obedience of the peoples be."

There is a conspicuous absence of any passages of an equally definite nature outside the Psalms, until we come to the book of Isaiah. In the so-called historical books the reason for this may be seen in the fact that their dramatic unity centres round the character of David, so that the conquest and the settlement seem to lead up to the establishment of the monarchy, and the story of the divided kingdom is to some extent a series of unfavourable comparisons between the later ages and the golden age of David and Solomon. Once, however, the reign and career of David come to be accepted as the purest epoch in the early life of the nation, the forward glances of the prophets and of all those who are looking for the redemption of Israel are directed towards the establishment of a super-Davidic monarchy which shall reproduce all the best features of the earlier age. The Davidic Messiah is in many cases nationalist rather than universalist; still he is the Messiah, and history is held to gravitate towards Him. This attitude of mind lies at the back of the inspiration of the book of Psalms. As the hymn book of the second Temple, its nominal association with David makes it messianic from beginning to

end. The representation of David as the spokesman in nearly every instance renders it easy to put nine out of ten psalms into the mouth of the expected Messiah. It is hardly surprising to find Jesus using the 22nd Psalm on the cross, and the Church interpreting almost the whole psalter as a series of lyrics woven around his Person.

When we come to the prophets we find it impossible to quote every passage. It is probable that the earlier prophetic writings look forward to the coming of a Day rather than to the appearance of a Person. Thus, for instance, Zephaniah 1⁷, Obadiah, verse 15, Isaiah 27¹ and Ezekiel 30¹⁻⁵. Nahum and Habakkuk do not even mention the Day, but, uttering their splendid rhapsodies in a time of darkness and tribulation, they declare their confidence in the moral government of God (Nahum 3¹⁻⁵ and Habakkuk 2⁹⁻¹⁷) and in a future in which His righteousness will triumph. The universalism of Amos has already been referred to.

In Isaiah 11 and in Habakkuk occurs the fine phrase, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

No sane critic is at pains to-day to make every passage where the tense is future refer to some event in the New Testament record, or to some political happening which has taken place in recent times. The prophets declared God's will for their own age, and many of their most famous passages are now seen to have had a perfectly simple explanation in contemporary history. Thus for instance

Isaiah 7¹⁰⁻¹⁷ and Isaiah 9¹⁻⁷. The messianic use of both passages (the second one of which is an insertion sometimes referred to the age of the Maccabees) has given them a wider significance than their original authors probably intended them to have. The careful researches of scholars have succeeded to some extent in discovering the principle, or rather lack of principle, upon which such a miscellaneous collection as that of the prophecies brought together under the name of Isaiah was compiled. It needs to be remembered, however, that to the pious Jew of our Lord's day no such knowledge was available, so that while he may have been aware of the extraordinary number of separate pieces in the patchwork, he would be wholly unable to assign dates to them.

There is no passage so closely associated with the Messiah as the magnificent deutero-isaianic first nine verses of chapter 42. But we read chapter 40 which deals with a similar topic, and find that the pardon and restoration of Jerusalem are to be accomplished by the parousia of a "mighty one," who shall be Jahveh's representative, for whom a new road is to be laid down, and who will feed his flock like a shepherd. In chapters 44²⁶, 45¹⁻², Jahveh "confirmeth the word of his servant and saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built." And, "to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, . . . I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain." It is difficult to believe that *all* these passages did not refer

when they were first uttered to the Persian monarch, and that the prophet, whoever he was, spoke in grateful appreciation if not in words of flattery.

But this critical view was not the one which appealed to the pious Jew in the first century before Christ. He was perfectly content to take chap. 42¹⁻⁹ as of purely messianic significance, and to align it with the promises made to Abraham and to the anonymous poem of Isaiah 53, where the servant is no longer a historical, but an ideal personage, and is to triumph through suffering.

The finest and most definite descriptions of the conquering Messiah are the poems Isaiah 11¹⁻⁹ and Isaiah 61, the latter an utterance evidently meant to proceed from the mouth of the Messiah himself.

It is perhaps the best evidence of the comparative lateness in date of these definite passages, that when we come to a relatively compact collection of prophecies such as the book of Jeremiah, we find hardly any of these ideal pictures. There is an insertion, Jeremiah 17²⁴⁻²⁸, which describes an ideal Jerusalem with kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, and similar promises of restoration in Jer. 30³ and 30¹⁸⁻²¹; also 31¹⁻¹⁴ and 31³¹⁻³⁴, and finally the most famous insertion Jer. 33¹⁴⁻¹⁸.

The book of Ezekiel is in the first part concerned with its own age, but the latter part from chapter 40 onwards is an elaborate description of the restored commonwealth of Israel, the divine kingdom of Jahveh on earth.

There are two definitely messianic passages, chap. 34 and chap. 37¹⁵⁻²⁸. The first fourteen

verses of chapter 37 are the famous vision of the valley of dry bones, a general prophecy of restoration, and it is followed (ver. 15) by a promise of the reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms "and my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd . . . and David my servant shall be their prince for ever . . . and the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." Part of this passage is repeated in chap. 34 where the "shepherd" theme is developed in detail. In verse 15, we read "I myself will feed my sheep, and will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God," but in verse 23 we read "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd." The picture of restored prosperity is continued to the end of the chapter. Whether the reference to David be a later insertion or not, it is plain that to the reader of the completed book there would be present the notion that the Messiah, though of the seed of David, was in some way to be *identified* with the Divine Person Himself.

The book of Jonah, it is agreed, converts an historical personage into a personification of the Hebrew people and dates from the time when its best thinkers first began to realise that it had a duty towards other nations which it was not always willing to perform, and an absolute significance in the history of the whole earth. It is noteworthy, however, that just as the suffering servant of

Jahveh began as the personification of the nation and afterwards came to represent the Messiah, so in the mind of Christ, Jonah is regarded as a type of the Messiah.

Micah (4) contains a repetition of Isaiah 2²⁻⁴, but is otherwise mainly concerned with contemporary politics. In it, however, are to be found, besides the famous moral poem chap. 6¹⁻⁸, the extraordinary passage, chap. 5²⁻⁴ "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands (or families) of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me [he] that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting . . . and he shall stand and shall feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace."

It is a relief to have arrived at the correct translation of Haggai 2⁷, although it renders useless all those hymns which refer to Christ as 'the desire of nations.' There is quite a definitely absolute claim, albeit a barbaric one, in the notion that the whole planet will be shaken by the judgment of God and the restored and ideal temple filled with the booty of all nations brought thither by Hebrew conquerors. This may be prophetic frenzy, or poetic exaggeration, but it involves a world-wide outlook.

A great contrast to this warlike magnificence is to be found in the famous passage Zech. 9⁹⁻¹⁷. Here the Messiah is a victor, but lowly, and he rides upon an ass. He is no military commander,

but calls upon north and south to lay aside their weapons " and he shall speak peace unto the nations ; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." This is a repetition of the picture presented by the grandest of all the messianic psalms, Psalm 72, which is in marked contrast to the stormy episode depicted in Psalm 2.

It would be easy to prolong the chain of quotations through the Apocalyptic literature, but the process, if persisted in, would be exceedingly laborious, for the materials are copious. It is perhaps enough to refer to the famous passage, Daniel 7, since this is in the English Bible, and can be easily consulted. Here the meaning is plain. The world is the stage. Upon it rises and falls a succession of empires whose fierce and predatory character can only be compared to the movements of wild creatures less than human. In marked contrast to these comes a human figure. The Divine Majesty sits in judgment and deposes the beasts, and the human figure is then brought before His presence. " The Man " stands before the Throne. " And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The picture is complete. Couple the vision with that of Isaiah 52¹⁴, 53 already referred to, where the Servant of God is not only the startler of many nations, but the sufferer who, because he pours

out his soul unto death, therefore divides his spoil with the strong, and it is easy to see what was in the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, and what in the minds of those who first believed on Him. Jesus of Nazareth was educated from His earliest youth in close familiarity with the literature which we have been rapidly surveying, and it is only necessary to read the Marcan version of His career in order to see at once how deeply the conviction burnt into His mind and heart that He was "The Man" who should come, and no other.

Certain considerations, however, have to be borne in mind, as we go on.

(1) Even such a hasty survey of Hebrew literature as we have been able to make, must have sufficed to show that the messianic hope embodied itself in a number of different forms, and these of unequal dignity and value. Thus to many Jews the coming of the Son of David must have meant little more than "When the king shall enjoy his own again" to an English Jacobite. To others the Messiah was doubtless a person of Divine origin, but His kingdom was to be an expansion of Judaism rather than a Catholic empire. The picture in the ninth chapter of Zechariah represents the conqueror as lowly, but he is still a conqueror riding in triumph and there is no mention of suffering, while the thirteenth verse suggests Maccabean operations against a Greek despot. It is a far cry from this to the universalism of Isaiah 11 and the picture of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 53. It must be admitted that in His selection of ideals Jesus deliberately chose the higher

and the less popular, and that He set Himself in line with the prophets much more than with the ecclesiastics of the revived Jewish church.

(2) We can thus discover only one single factor common to all the expectant Israelites of the age in which Christ came, namely that *they all used the future tense*, and looked forward, rather than to the present or past. The moment we leave Jewish and enter Christian literature this factor ceases to have any importance. It appears almost for the last time in the utterances of John the Baptist. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "He shall baptise you." "There cometh he that is mightier than I." And even the Baptist in the Johannine version is represented as speaking in the present tense. "There standeth one among you whom ye know not." "Behold the Lamb of God." "This is He of whom I said . . ." From the Baptist onwards the *present* and the *past* tenses become those dominant in Biblical literature.

Now these are simple points, the last especially so. And yet, simple as they are, they stand as evidences of an outlook upon affairs which is peculiar and unique. It would not signify much that the people of some obscure oriental province had produced a prophet who regarded himself as the fulfilment of a chain of purpose. It matters intensely that such a belief has made a bid for universal acceptance, and is still to-day the only active universalist creed which shows any sign of winning its way. Partial as its success has been, feeble and nominal as are many of its professing adherents, it is the only

religious Weltanschauung which has spread far towards the poles, and made any pretence at training saints in any given country one likes to mention.

The phenomenon is therefore at the lowest valuation noteworthy. But it is more than that. In isolating the absolute elements of the prophetic teaching we have for convenience ignored a twin element which is of equal importance. The Jewish prophetic personalism is amazingly ethical and so is its Christian fulfilment. The "Life in Messiah's name," which is vouchsafed to mankind is a consistently moral life. Moral schemes exist in the world, notably that of Confucius. Yet here in the Christian scheme is no mere code, but the divine gift of Life, Life in a kingdom, the means to be the best that one can be through the intuitive adoption of a personal relationship to a Personal Ruler in a free fellowship. The inauguration of a commonwealth so large and loving might well seem to have been "good news."

Three objections to this must, however, be given, as they are at times put forward.

A. The world-wide propaganda of Christianity is based upon an illusion. Once again, such an objection seems to me perilously near asserting that the universe is a fraud. That such an intuition as that of the finest spirits in Israel should have been an illusion, appears contrary to sound judgment.

B. The majority of the Jews of the first century did not accept their contemporary as the Messiah. This is precisely what we might have expected. It was always the minority in any given age who were

really faithful. Hebrew history is one long story of elect minorities separated out to initiate an advance or preserve some spiritual treasure. The Israel that rejected Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, was, as has already been pointed out, held by Jewish Christians to be that portion of the ecclesia of God which had failed in its duty of recognition and loyalty and so was ruled out of the line of development. The true sequence falls to the Christian ecclesia, whose members were already to some extent accustomed to fellowship with Gentiles by the admission of proselytes, and the rise of the "God-fearers" (σεβομένοι τὸν θεόν).

Moreover, the disciples of Jesus cannot have accepted Him as the Messiah merely on account of His assertion, but because He was worthy to be identified with Him "who should come." His own intrinsic holiness won Him the right to have His claim accepted.

C. Even if the traditional valuation be adopted as far as we have gone, it does not exclude the notion of a further revelation. This objection may best be dealt with by an appeal to the course of history (see chap. 5), but we shall see that the answer lies partly in the New Testament, sub-apostolic, and patristic literature, and to this we must next turn our attention.

The passages will be taken in their usual order, and in the sense in which they are traditionally interpreted.

The first gospel is in its final edition an appeal to Jews; yet it incorporates (i) the story of the

Temptation where "the devil taketh Him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them"; (ii) the speech to the centurion, "many shall come from the east and the west and recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven"; (iii) the extract from Isaiah 42¹⁻³, "He shall declare judgment to the Gentiles . . . and in His name shall the Gentiles hope"; (iv) the references to the men of Nineveh and the queen of the south; (v) the parable of the draw-net, which "gathered of every kind"; (vi) the apocalyptic saying in 24¹⁴, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony unto all the nations." It is true that against these must be set the spirit of the first two chapters, which is well summed up in the phrases "He shall save His people from their sins," and "which shall be shepherd of My people Israel"; and the passages 10⁶, "Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and 15²⁴, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The universalism and the nationalism lie side by side in the text as two separate motifs. It is not necessary to make them contradict one another. People who speak fervently about their hopes of a League of Nations are at other times to be found uttering words of affectionate patriotism, and rightly maintain that there is no inconsistency in such behaviour. The first care of Jesus was for His own people. He hoped to work outward from them. He, like his follower Paul had a deep affection for their traditions

and glorious inheritance. But the majority of them failed Him. They did not rise to the loftiness of His call, nor could they bring themselves to sympathise with His preference for the universalist sentiments of the Isaianic cycle of prophecy. We know now that such universalism was more tolerated in rabbinical circles than was formerly believed to be the case. Nevertheless the consolidation of the elect and faithful Christian Jews into the nucleus of a Catholic ecclesia with an absolute creed was a severe task, not accomplished till long after the first Whitsuntide.

In the Marcan narrative a Gentile reader is assumed, since Aramaic terms are translated, and foreign words such as *σπεκουλάτωρ* occur. Yet the atmosphere is hardly at all universalist, and the Messiah is very definitely Jewish. There is it is true the famous missionary injunction in 16¹⁵; but this is not part of the original gospel and is simply another piece of editing. We have then the remarkable spectacle of a Palestinian Messiah imposed upon Graeco-Roman readers, with hardly any modifications, as the Saviour of the world.

Much the same conclusion must be felt to emerge from a reading of the third gospel. The story of the Infancy is utterly and completely Jewish, yet the book ends with an injunction that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Messiah unto all the nations. If we remember that the third gospel is by the same author as the Book of Acts, and accept the Lucan authorship of both, we are confronted with the spectacle of an

educated Greek presenting his compatriots with the historical account of a real Kurios who is to be worshipped by the whole world, but whose origin and milieu are essentially Palestinian and Jewish.

In the fourth gospel we encounter in the prologue the first real attempt to give Jesus the Messiah a cosmic significance. "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth."

It is not possible here to go into the theology of the Johannine writings in detail, but the essence of the situation is the same as in the Pauline writings, namely that as in the one case there is but one Word or Logos, so in the other there is but one Lord or Kurios, and both are identified with the individual Jesus of Nazareth who believed Himself to be the transcendental and pre-existent Jewish Messiah, and was accepted by His followers as such. This is the motif of such passages in the fourth Gospel as 1³⁰, 2²⁴⁻²⁵, 3¹³⁻¹⁸, and 31-36, 5¹⁹⁻⁴⁷, 6²⁷⁻⁵⁹, 8¹²⁻⁵⁹, 10⁷⁻³⁹, 12³², and especially chapter 17. It is real absolutism, without any compromise. The Spirit of the last discourses is the Spirit of Jesus and the principle they embody is that there will be no other guide in the future who will lead into all truth and declare the things that are to come, save this same Spirit. He will convict the world in respect of sin, through judging it by the Christian standard. Sin will henceforth be unfaithfulness to Jesus. The principles of conduct allow of no further evolution because Jesus has ascended to the Father. Development there must needs be, interpretation and application. But the

Spirit of truth in these matters will always glorify Jesus, and no one else. In like manner the speech before Pilate in the Johannine version makes Jesus the King of Truth.

The book of Acts opens with a speech of Jesus to His apostles in which He tells them to be witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth." This universalism lies at the back of the strange story of the Pentecostal tongues. It conflicts for a time with the Palestinian outlook of Peter whose sermons to Jews in chapters 2, 3, and 5, although they refer to the promise to Abraham, 3²⁵, seem to lack enthusiasm for the wider vision, as is indeed not surprising, and represent Jesus, 5³¹, as exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to *Israel* and remission of sins." The speech of Stephen is an attempt to convert the narrower Jews to the wider outlook, by reminding them that the Divine Providence is not territorial, but was exercised in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the wilderness. It is natural to find such sentiments closely followed by the story in which the Ethiopian "God-fearer," after the study of Isaiah, is baptised by Philip, who like Stephen and the other "deacons," bears a Greek name. The still more important episode ensues in which Peter is brought in touch with Cornelius, the Italian "God-fearer." In 11¹⁹ occur the remarkable words "speaking the word to none save only to Jews." It is still evidently an exceptional thing for the word to be spoken to non-Jews, for in the next verse we read that some men of Cyprus and Cyrene actually at Antioch

spoke to Greeks, preaching the Kurios Jesus. This is so unusual that some manuscripts for *Ἑλλήνας* read *Ἑλλημιστάς*,¹ although the application of the epithet "Kurios" to our Lord's name seems to suggest that these innovators were for the first time seeking to identify the historical Jesus with the kurios of the mysteries. The general policy is well stated in chapter 13. Paul preaches at Antioch in Pisidia a sermon to Jews which is entirely in line with the Petrine sermons of the earlier chapters. It is clear however that the devout proselytes or "God-fearers" felt that the message applied to them as well in spite of their Gentile parentage, with the result that "the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God." Allowing for some exaggeration, it is plain that a very large Gentile crowd was attracted. When the Jews begin to contradict and blaspheme, Paul and Barnabas boldly address them with the words: "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken unto you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,

'I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.'"

The policy here outlined seems identical with that of our Lord, and it is from this time forward steadily adhered to, although efforts are made to

¹ Rackham represents that this is a pointless remark if *Ἑλλημιστάς* is the correct reading.

limit the force of it by the Judaising party who wish to impose circumcision and the food-law upon Gentile converts.

It is difficult for us at this long distance from the events to realise what it must have meant for two Jews in the city of Lystra to address a crowd which was prepared to sacrifice to Zeus and Hermes, and tell it not merely that its objects of worship and its sacrifices were vain things, but that "the living God, who made the heaven the earth and the sea and all that in them is, who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways" was really the God hitherto worshipped by, and revealing Himself to the Hebrew people. That this is the case is the more evident from the trouble that is taken to conciliate the conservative brethren who find it difficult to realise that it is not inconsistent with good Jewish churchmanship to allow that a door of faith has been opened unto the Gentiles. The speech of James, 15¹³, is probably founded on fact, and shows that it was necessary to give chapter and verse (Amos 9¹¹⁻¹²) for a change in the liberal direction, very much as it would be to-day. It is a far cry from the Paul who circumcises Timothy "because of the Jews that were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek," to the Paul who withstands Peter to his face and writes to the Galatians, "I say unto you, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. . . . I would that they which unsettle you would even circumcise themselves off from the community."

It is in fact clear that just as the Christian ecclesia evolved itself out of and separated itself off from the Jewish ecclesia, so the Catholic Christian ecclesia evolved itself out of the Judaising Christian ecclesia. The former increases while the latter decreases.

In the speech at Athens 17²²⁻³¹ Paul describes "the God that made the world and all things therein, being Lord of Heaven and earth . . . "who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"; and who "made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth"; and identifies Him with the God who has sent the Messiah or Christ, has raised Him from the dead and is now preparing to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness, by the self-same Messiah.

I think it is equally clear that the Gentile world was a long time grasping the fact of this universalist claim. Thus in Ephesus the town-clerk appeases the people by informing them that Paul and his followers are not blasphemers of the goddess Diana. This may have been a very excellent way of quieting an angry mob, but the statement suggests either that the town-clerk was deliberately insincere or that he did not know what Paul was really teaching, but assumed as so many Roman officials did, that the Christians were merely a Jewish sect. As the uncompromising absoluteness of their teaching penetrated into the official mind it produced no small dismay, and the more so because it left the government representatives, in proportion to their conscientiousness, very little

room in which to avoid instituting proceedings. A people who wanted the whole Pantheon to themselves and would not tolerate a pleasing variety of deities suitable to all tastes were not only tiresome, but in view of the veneration offered to dead and living emperors, distinctly seditious. In the book of Acts we have not got for the most part as far as this, though there is a hint of it in 17⁷, "these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

The story of the arrest and trial of Paul does not give us very much additional matter in the illustration of doctrine, except that it provides two versions of the story of Paul's vision on the way to Damascus, in addition to the speeches made before the high priest, Felix, and Festus. In all these the starting point of the discussion is that Paul is a Jew, and that he approaches religion as such, and yet claims his freedom to detach himself from national traditions for the sake of a wider vision. In every case he makes use of his opportunity to try to win a Gentile. The book leaves him at Rome declaring to Jews that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.

In dealing with the Epistles, it is needful to make an exception and to take the bulk of the Pauline ones as far as possible in their chronological order. In I and II Thessalonians the outlook as is well known is frankly apocalyptic. The world is so soon coming to an end that there is none too much time in which to warn such sections of the Gentile world as can be reached. This apocalyptic element

is of course to be found in the Gospels as well, and is not altogether absent in the other Epistles. It has seemed useful, however, to reserve discussion of it to this point, and to deal with it here as a whole. If we seek to illustrate it by an analogy, it probably occupied as an undercurrent in contemporary thought much the same position as that which was held by the idea of evolutionary progress in popular thought prior to A.D. 1914. There is no reason for denying that our Lord sometimes spoke in terms of apocalyptic, but the extent to which He meant His illustrations to be taken seriously and prosaically has probably been a good deal exaggerated by His immediate disciples. It requires somewhat ruthless treatment of His sayings to eliminate those which seem to imply a continuance of the world-order after the coming of the new age. As poet and as prophet our Lord described the coming of the Kingdom in terms sudden, graphic and picturesque. But the world as we see did not come to a sudden end. It has continued its existence up to our own day, without any serious breaks beyond those afforded by the rise and fall of nations, and seems likely so to continue for some while as yet. It is to credit our Lord with less discernment than even a reputable Jewish prophet, and certainly to ignore both the opinions held by some of His Gentile contemporaries of which He can hardly have been wholly ignorant, and to discount as it seems to me almost entirely the genius of His judgment in matters where the most rebelliously independent thinkers still sit at His feet,—it is to set all this aside

to represent Him as so short-sighted as to have held the deluded belief that the world would end with His generation. He may not have been greatly at pains to disentangle His own message from contemporary credulities, but I cannot bring myself to believe that He was mistaken. It seems to me that with the steady diminution in the belief in the immediate end of the world which marks the early ages of Christianity, we get a recovery of the true balance which I believe to have existed in the mind of our Master.

The significance of all this for our argument should be plain. It is one thing to have attained to the Absolute Religion just in time for it to sustain you like a life-buoy amid the wreckage of a destroyed world. It is another to have attained it in order that you may share it with generations to come and transmit it to all peoples, nations and languages. There is a kind of contradiction, like the breach of dramatic unities in a bad play, about the conscious and laborious working up of Hebrew history to the messianic climax, with all the blessing that it involved for the nations far and wide, if that climax is immediately followed by "the earth and the works that are therein," being literally "burned up." "The end of the world" *must* have meant "the coming of a new age."¹

¹ It is a matter which may well be disputed, whether the Jewish thought of the end of the age did actually mean what *we* mean by the end of the world. Many of the passages suggest the construction of a new earth, and not a final dissolution of the planet. Probably there was a good deal of vagueness and fluctuation in these beliefs. See Charles, *Between The Old and New Testaments*, and the original documents.

Returning then to I and II Thessalonians, the outlook as far as the world goes is limited by the imminence of the end. The message it is true is for Gentiles (2¹⁶), and Macedonia and Achaia have accepted it. But the second coming of Christ is to be expected very shortly, as a thief in the night (5¹⁻²). In II Thessalonians this imminence has evidently been called in question, since the writer in chapter 2; modifies his previous statement by defining a limit; the day of the Lord will not come "except the falling away come first and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition . . . there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." What is commonly called (not I think very accurately) the Johannine doctrine of judgment seems to have begun to be put forward by some, for we read (2²), "We beseech you . . . that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind nor yet be troubled, either by spirit or by word or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present." It is obvious that the writer of the epistle disagrees with this. I think it is possible to exaggerate however the development of doctrine which takes place in the New Testament with regard to "the last things." Much uncertainty as to the future seems to have hung round the communities in which our documents circulated. It is only necessary by way of illustration to refer to Romans 2¹⁶, 8¹⁸⁻²³, 16²⁰ ("the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"), I Corinthians 1⁸, 7²⁹ (and indeed the spirit of the whole chapter), 15⁵¹⁻⁵⁸ and 16²², Philippians 1⁶, 3²⁰, 4⁵, Colossians 3⁴, I Timothy

6¹⁴⁻¹⁵, II Timothy 3¹ and 4¹, Titus 2¹³, Hebrews 4, 11⁴⁰, and 12^{14 and 25-29}, I Peter 4⁷⁻¹⁹, II Peter 3⁸⁻¹³, I John 2¹⁸, Jude 1⁸, Rev. 22²⁰. In all these the imminence of the end is hinted at. We have however on the other hand:—(1) The elaborate argument of Romans is intended to lead to the conclusion that the doctrine of God finding its climax in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth (see the dedication 1¹⁻⁷ and the postscript 16²⁸) is the absolute doctrine for all nations, and that Paul hopes to have reasonable time before the return of Christ, to proclaim the doctrine in Rome and in the province of Spain, while in addition to the journey recorded in Acts he refers to an evangelistic journey "even unto Illyricum" (the modern Dalmatia), and in 11²⁵ says that "a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness¹ of the Gentiles be come in."

(2) In I Corinthians we see the growing of the Graeco-Roman element. Romans is addressed to Jews. I Corinthians boldly includes Greeks, 1²⁴, and for the first time shows us an instance of the clear application to our Lord of the title "KURIOS" in the sense in which it was used in the Graeco-Roman mysteries 8^{6, 8}, 12³. But the title is applied absolutely. Jesus is not added, as the Emperor Septimius Severus² would have had Him added, as an extra deity to the Roman pantheon. He is the sole KURIOS, "through whom are all things and we through him."

¹ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν.

² And perhaps also Tiberius. See Tertullian, *Apology*.

(3) In II Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians there does not seem to be any suggestion of an approaching end. In II Corinthians 5¹⁶⁻¹⁷ there is even a leaning towards the view that Christ has returned in the spirit, and will be known no more after the flesh, and that where His rule is accepted, the old world has passed away and the new age has set in. The teaching of Galatians is almost entirely directed towards establishing the Catholic trend of the promise to Abraham, 3²⁹, "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

(4) In Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians we get the development of that cosmic conception of the Person of our Lord, and the description of the Church as His Body, which have played so important a part in succeeding ages. Thus Eph. 1¹⁰ and 2⁰⁻²³, 4¹⁵⁻¹⁶, and the noble passage on the Gentiles 2¹¹ to 3²¹; Philippians 2⁵⁻¹¹, 3²⁰⁻²¹, Col. 1¹⁴⁻²⁰, and 2³, and finally Col. 3¹¹ ("there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all").

The epistle to the Hebrews and the epistle of James are both directed to Jewish readers, and it must be confessed that there are no instances of a universalist outlook to be found in either of them, since the object of each is to commend a certain domestic policy to Jewish minds. Nevertheless the Old Testament background is accepted. In Hebrews Jesus is given just such a cosmic position as is supported by the messianic psalms and is declared to be the same yesterday, to-day, yea, and

for ever (13⁸), and in James He is described by the title "the Lord of glory," (if indeed this be the correct translation). I. Peter is also addressed to the "Dispersion." It is difficult to extract from it any conception of a world-wide kingdom under the absolute lordship of Christ. Judgment, it tells us, is ready to begin at the house of God, and Christian Jews are to have their behaviour seemly among the Gentiles, . . . that they may by their good works induce the Gentiles to glorify God in the day of visitation(2¹²).

II. Peter and Jude, both writings of uncertain authorship, the former probably of late date, and both bearing considerable resemblance to Jewish apocryphal writings, throw very little light upon the conception of an absolute religion. Jude can see no further than the imminent judgment, but to Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, he ascribes "glory, majesty, dominion, and power before all time, and now, and for evermore." II. Peter on the other hand looks for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The two short Johannine epistles furnish no special evidence, but the first epistle, like the fourth gospel, identifies Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah with the Divine Logos or Word.

The Book Revelation stands by itself. We know something about its date and historical background, and we are able by placing it beside Jewish apocalypses to distinguish between the characteristic phraseology which is common to all, and the distinct contribution which is its own

peculiar property. Like the Jewish apocalypses its outlook is the rescue of a persecuted minority and the utter destruction of its tormentors by a Divine Judge, and its imagery is closely akin to that of the Book of Daniel.

Whereas, however, the Divine Judge of Daniel and the other apocalypses is an ideal personage yet to be revealed, the judge of the Johannine apocalypse is an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. To Him are transferred all the divine attributes. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the holder of the keys of death and of Hades, the inheritor of the splendour and world-wide sovereignty associated with the "Man" of the Book of Daniel. He has the seven spirits of God (a reminiscence of Isaiah 11²). He is the Spirit, and is therefore presumably the present and returned Christ, the Spirit of Jesus, referred to in John 14¹⁷ and 16¹³. In 5⁹⁻¹⁴ we get the adoration of the Lamb, and the ascription to Him of universal dominion. What immediately follows is plainly a detailed description of the imminent judgment which is so frequently referred to in the preceding New Testament books. It is spread over chapters 6-20, and is inspired by contemporary events.¹

It is noticeable that the whole world is not saved. Out of the twelve tribes of the Jews a definite proportion are sealed, represented in each case by the symbolic number of twelve thousand.

¹ See Edmundson, *The Church of Rome in the First Century*; also Dr. Swete's *Commentary*, and the more recent works by Dr. Peake and Dr. Beckwith.

In addition to these a great multitude which no man could number out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues is assembled, having come out of the great tribulation, *i.e.* out of the judgment. Thus the redeemed consist of (a) faithful Jews, (b) an indefinite but selected number of "God-fearers" of a new kind. The rest of the population in the world is simply destroyed.

In chapter 21 comes the description of the new heaven and the new earth. Here it is to be noted that it is still a Jewish new earth. There is no more sea, because the Jews hated sea-faring; and there is a new Jerusalem built upon Mount Sion, a real city in spite of the oriental imagery with which it is described. It is a kind of spiritual metropolis for the Lamb's world-wide empire, and in it are concentrated all the treasures of the world 21²⁴⁻²⁶.

Later ages have given to this book a far more mystical interpretation than its imaginative writer probably intended. He was still dreaming Jewish dreams of the messianic kingdom, and while the Person of Jesus is to him central and absolute, he is still wistfully looking for the time when the Lord will again restore the kingdom to Israel.

This completes our survey of the New Testament documents, and it is surprising to find in what a Jewish atmosphere they leave us, if we read them naturally and without prejudice. They are a welter of conflict between the Palestinian and the world-wide, the Jewish and the cosmic outlooks, between Judaism and Hellenism, realism and mysticism. Almost the only point on which they agree, is that

Jesus is "He who should come"; they do not "look for another," only for His return. As one reads them again and again, one is more than ever confirmed in the deep conviction that Jesus Himself beyond all power of expression out-tops His interpreters. All that most of them know is that He is the Person foretold in their history and expected by their saints. When they try to comment on Him they fumble. With the exception of Paul, and Luke his friend and physician, and the author of the Johannine writings, they are in spite of their earnestness a small-minded set of people, incapable of appreciating as their Master did the glorious message of the prophetic literature which they have inherited.

The Jewish atmosphere of the New Testament affords us in one direction a certain deliverance in the face of a rather serious difficulty. Two different schools of thought, both of which are agreed in holding the main outline of the life of Christ as historical, are in danger of coming into conflict over the matter and content of His divinity. Mr. T. R. Glover, whose book *The Jesus of History* has been commended by the present Primate, assures us that we really only know God through Jesus, that if God be denoted by X then we have to solve our X from Jesus—not to discover Him through it, since we actually know Jesus a great deal better than we know our X.¹ Further, he says that to explain Jesus, His friends and contemporaries spoke of Him as the Messiah, the Logos, and

¹ See Luther, Longer Catechism.

so forth, and that not one of these terms is intelligible to us to-day without a commentary, while to ordinary people, Jesus Himself is at once intelligible, and He Himself has antiquated every one of those conceptions. The Bishop of Zanzibar on the other hand entirely repudiates this method of approaching the revelation of God in Christ. If, he says, we only know X through Jesus, how do we know that Jesus is the solution of X? If our estimate of Jesus depends upon our own pre-suppositions, it is quite as likely to lead us to reject as to accept Him. Living as we do upon long-accumulated reserves of Christian sentiment, we naturally feel the Divine in His Personality. But if we had been brought up in a pagan atmosphere, and had had no Christian reserves upon which to draw, it is just as likely that the ideals of Jesus would not have appealed to us. Ethelbert of Kent for instance is usually represented as having told Saint Augustine that he did not care for the Christian God since the gods of his fathers were all warriors, mighty and victorious, and the Christian God in comparison seemed a poor defeated creature. Mr. Glover's method therefore, according to the Bishop, of discovering God through Jesus because of the attractiveness of His Personality, is only valid for those who already admire the Christian character. In other words, Mr. Glover's argument is a particular use of the general argument drawn from human needs, and it will not hold, because the doctrine of Jesus conflicts violently at certain points with very widespread human desires.

The disagreement of two minds, of whose genuine devotion to our Lord there can be no possible doubt, is greatly to be deplored. There is however good hope of a reconciliation. In the first place it can hardly be denied that the heroic Personality of Jesus of Nazareth is so many-sided that it can scarcely fail to awaken *some* response wherever it is fairly presented, and this quite apart from any theological deductions which may or may not be made from it. After all, Ethelbert was converted. *Some* chord in his heart must have been touched.

Probably Bp. Weston, like Robert Moffat "the lion-tamer," has seen savage warriors converted into gentle and restrained "Christian strong men." We have already noted that the disciples believed Jesus to be the Messiah, because He was great and noble enough to justify his claim.

Jesus of Nazareth however is not isolated in a vacuum. He is an historical Figure, and it is impossible to give the right value to His affirmations about God without some knowledge of the meaning of the terms He used. When, for instance, He says, "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," we can hardly expect to arrive at the full meaning of the words unless we know what is meant by the phrase "Son of Man." Plainly it does not mean 'any man you like.' Remove the oriental idiom and translate it "The Man" and we are no nearer to a solution. Why should Jesus go out of the way to use such a cryptic title to describe Himself? Who does He regard Himself as being? What is the novelty, the message involved in saying

that "The Man is come not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life, a ransom for many"? Instantly the whole question is opened of Jewish history and Jewish theology. We are led back at once to the Traditional Valuation of Christianity as the absolute religion, so valued because it is centred upon Him "who should come," the preparation for whose advent may be discerned as a gold thread running through all preceding history. It is only by giving proper respect to this witness of history that Jesus of Nazareth can become invested for us with His full authority.

Now I feel sure that Mr. Glover, in spite of what he has said about the Messiah, would not really wish to deny the point that has just been made. His own interest lies, it is true, in the attempt to look at the record of the New Testament from the point of view of a humanist who knows the East but does not know much about the Jews, and is perhaps rather inclined to scoff at them as unimportant.

Mr. Glover, in fact, is an evangelist engaged in writing a new gospel for a new sort of Gentile (and as much prejudiced in one direction as the compiler of the first gospel is in the other), and it is clear gain both to us as well as to his Indian hearers that he has aimed at showing what a very large and precious amount of vital spiritual truth can be extracted by merely giving the ancient tale its face value. It is perhaps this side of Mr. Glover's work which the Bishop of Zanzibar hardly appreciates with justice. The Bishop, however, rightly

discerns that this method cannot give us the whole truth.¹ Of course if Professor Bousset were right, and the whole of the Messianic setting of the words of Jesus proved to be the effort of the first generation at an interpretation of His Person, we should indeed be thrown back upon Mr. Glover. But the entire trend of the evidence carries us away from Professor Bousset's thesis. It favours the belief that however far Jesus of Nazareth outstripped His contemporaries in the grandeur of His Messianic conceptions, He did beyond all doubt regard Himself as in some sense the great climax, and by whatever name subsequent generations may choose to call that climax, with its recognition as such stands or falls the dominant authority of the Christian religion.²

¹ Where I think the Bishop is wrong is in regarding the Old Testament as giving us certain ideas about God on which we can build and depend, and by which we test the character of Christ, and know Him to be Divine. This is very dangerous. It sounds like a justification of Old Testament imprecations and atrocities. Which Old Testament conceptions of God does the Bishop use as the test of Christ? And on what grounds does he exclude others in making his selection?

² "His consciousness of being the fulfiller, of sitting regnant for ever upon the throne of history, cannot be stricken from the portrait of His Person without destroying it." Burman G. Foster, *The Finality of the Christian Religion* (Chicago Theological Essays).

112 THE TRADITIONAL VALUATION

APPROXIMATE DATES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL BOOKS.

The chronological arrangement of the earlier part of this literature is exceptionally difficult, and even the later and apocryphal books can only be approximately dated.¹

B.C.

2123-2081. Hammurabi king of Babylonia.

1300-1234. Rameses II. king of Egypt.

1230. The Exodus from Egypt.

To the last period or perhaps a still earlier origin may be referred the old folk-songs such as the Song of Lamech.

1230-1025. The Song of Deborah and the Riddle of Samson.

1025. Saul.

1010. David, to whose reign belong a few more of the primitive lyrics, and perhaps the Blessing of Jacob.

970. Solomon, to whose period may be attributed :
Some of the aphorisms of the Book of Proverbs.

The oracles of Balaam in their earliest form.

The Book of Jashar.

The Book of the Wars of Jahveh.

The Story of Samuel, Saul and David, and the story of David's court.

The oldest records of the conquest and the Judges may now have been compiled.

c. 940. (in Judah) The Pentateuchal source J.

(in Israel) The Pentateuchal source E.

From now onwards until the downfall of the Kingdoms, each kept its chronicles, and the surviving fragments were afterwards incorporated in the extant historical books.

c. 760. Amos, in original form.

c. 750-735. Hosea, in original form.

c. 740-700. Isaiah, the earliest collection.

c. 739-639. Micah, the earlier half.

722. Fall of the Northern Kingdom.

¹ I have based this O.T. Catalogue upon Dr. Peake's Dictionary.

- ? 698. Perhaps Micah 6 ¹⁻⁸, followed by the original sections of the Deuteronomic narrative (D).
640. Josiah. Adoption of D as authoritative. Zephaniah.
- c. 608. Nahum.
- 608-586. Jeremiah. First collection 604.
- 586-516. Much compilation. Judges, Samuel and Kings probably assumed their present form. Ezekiel, followed by the Priestly code (P).
- 560-550. Habakkuk (the original).
 "Deutero-"Isaiah (40-55) and non-primitive passages in Is. 1-39, with a few exceptions. Lamentations (2, 4, early exilic; 1, 5, late exilic; 3, post-exilic). Also Dent. 32.
520. Haggai and Zechariah (1-8).
- c. 450. Malachi and Isaiah (56-66).
- 500-476. Compilation of the Priestly Code, soon after followed by the Pentateuch in its present form.
- c. 3rd or 4th cent. Ruth and Jonah (except his Psalm). Obadiah.
- Exile to 130 B.C. Psalms for the most part. Maccabaeen Psalms more numerous than formerly supposed
- Greek period. Nearly all the Wisdom literature. The Song of Songs (a series of Wedding Songs).
- End of 3rd or beginning of 2nd cent. Ecclesiastes.
- c. 400. Job, incorporating pieces of an earlier work.
- c. 424, not later. Ezra and Nehemiah, originally.
- c. 300. { Ezra and Nehemiah in present form.
 1 and 2 Chronicles in present form.
 Joel.
 Isaiah 24-27.
 Zechariah 9-14.
- c. 168-165. Daniel. *Perhaps* Isaiah 9 ²⁻⁷. Psalms of Solomon.
- 170-64. Book of Enoch.
- 135-115. Book of Jubilees.
- 109-107. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

114 THE TRADITIONAL VALUATION

APPROXIMATE DATES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL BOOKS.

The following table is based upon Moffatt, *Introduction to the New Testament*.

A.D.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Between 1-30. | The Secrets of Enoch. The Assumption of Moses. |
| 46. | Galatians. |
| 49. | 1 and 2 Thessalonians. |
| 52-54. | 1 and 2 Corinthians. |
| 56. | Romans. |
| 58. | ? James. |
| 60. | Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians (?), Philippians. |
| 64. | 1 Peter. |
| 70. | Mark. |
| 80. | Matthew. |
| | Hebrews. |
| 81. | Gospel according to Hebrews. |
| | Jude. |
| | 4 Esdras and Apocalypse of Baruch. |
| 96. | Revelation. |
| | Clement of Rome, Epistle to Corinthians. |
| | Luke and Acts (? c. 85). |
| 100-115. | John, 1 John. |
| | Pastoral Epistles (in present form). |
| | ? James. |
| | 2 and 3 John. |
| | Gnostic literature begins. |
| | Ascension of Isaiah (part). |
| | Book of Elxai (?). |
| | Didache. |
| | Gospel of Egyptians. |
| | Roman Symbol. |
| 117. | Epistle of Polycarp. |
| | Ebionite Gospel of the Twelve. |
| 120. | Quadratus, Apology. |
| | Aquila's Version of Old Testament. |
| | Preaching of Peter. |
| | Sibylline Oracles, vv. 1-51 (?). |

- 130. Epistle of Barnabas.
- 135. Papias, Exposition of Dominical Sayings.
Hermas, The Shepherd.
- 140. Epistle to Diognetus, i-x.
Aristides' Apology.
2 Clement.
Apocalypse of Peter.
- 150. 2 Peter.
- 150-155. Tatian, Justin's Apology, Gospel of Peter.

CHAPTER III—*Continued*

THE TRADITIONAL VALUATION IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

WE arrive then at the fact that the Graeco-Roman world by a gradual process extending over some three or four hundred years came to adopt the Christocentric interpretation of history as true and final. It is as well to consider what kind of steps were taken by the Christian apologists and missionaries to bring this about. The first Christian pioneers took a deeply ethical Personalism, that is to say a belief in a Deity whose behaviour and claims were invariably and consistently affirmations of unchanging absolute spiritual values, credited that Person with a certain definite action in history, culminating in a heroic earthly incarnation of utter self-sacrifice, and said :—

“ This is to be the world’s guide for ever and ever.” The importance of studying their methods may be explained by the fact that they had to deal with a totally different problem from that which faces most of us to-day, except perhaps missionaries working in China and India. They had to show why men should give up the customs of their fathers

and adopt a *new* religion. Apollo had spoken oracles at Delphi for some 3000 years, and the gods of Egypt were older still. Why then were they to be given up? The apologists seem to have employed two chief arguments; (1) the universal influence of the Divine Logos, now at length followed by his Incarnation, which rendered all previous beliefs out-of-date; (2) the antiquity of the Mosaic dispensation. The first of these remains valid to-day, but the second is rather hard to maintain.

1. Thus Justin Martyr in his first apology, ch. xlvi., and in his second apology, chs. viii., x. and xiii., repeatedly affirms the doctrine that the Word was in the world before Christ, though not in the same manner.

"All have been hated in whom the Word has dwelt. Such for example were those of the Stoic school,—since as far as their moral teaching went they were admirable, as were also the poets in some particulars on account of the seed of reason implanted in every race of men (cf. Heraclitus, Musonius, etc.)"

" For whatever law-givers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word."

"I confess that I boast and with all my strength strive to be found a Christian, not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in all respects similar, as neither are those of the others, Stoics, poets, and historians. For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic Word."

"For not only among the Greeks did reason (Logos) prevail to condemn these things through Socrates, but also among the barbarians were they condemned by reason, who took shape and became man and was called Jesus Christ."

Athenagoras also says that "poets and philosophers . . . were moved, by reason of their affinity with the *afflatus* from God, each one by his own soul, to try whether he could find out and apprehend the truth."

Clement of Alexandria in his *Address to the Heathen* says: "For into all men whatever, especially those who are occupied with intellectual pursuits, a certain *divine effluence* has been instilled; wherefore, though reluctantly, they confess that God is one, indestructible, unbegotten, etc."—and he also speaks of the poets as bearing testimony to the truth.

The famous argument which Tertullian produces in the seventeenth chapter of his *Apology*, and again in the twenty-first chapter, and in the separate treatise, "On the Testimony of the Soul," is only another form of the same affirmation. "Soul," says Tertullian, "stand thou forth . . . rude, simple and unpolished, . . . I have need of thine experience." The gist of his contention is that the Eternal God created the world through the Word and that the natural soul bears testimony to this Word. Zeno and Cleanthes witness to the Word's activity, and in fact the language of the soul is universal, and will always decide for truth against error.

2. The second argument, *i.e.* the antiquity of the Mosaic dispensation, whatever we may think

of its value, is of especial interest, since it represents the use of our Old Testament documents for the purpose of proving exactly the opposite of what the modern mind to-day requires. Whereas the modern critic treats the remoteness of the gospel story as a sign that it is inapplicable to the needs of the present age, to Porphyry, the most formidable heathen opponent of the early apologists, such remoteness would not have seemed an argument against belief. Both Porphyry and Celsus object to the Judæo-Christian position on the ground that it is too recent a development. It is an upstart growth, say they ; a vulgarly new theology. Hence we find strenuous efforts on the part of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, Book I. ch. xxi.), Tertullian (*Apology*, ch. xlvii.), Theophilus (*ad Autolycum*), among others, to establish the prior antiquity of Moses and the Pentateuch, and to prove that the Greek philosophers were indebted to them for many of their doctrines. Tertullian in his treatise *De Praescriptione Hereticorum*, ch. xxx. applies the same argument as the heathen critics to refute the doctrine of those whom he calls heretics, and points out that the true orthodox teaching with which they disagree is earlier in date of appearance. This priority of Catholic doctrine is to him one of the chief evidences of its truth. A similar argument is to be found in one of St. Augustine's letters to a pagan, who complained of the lateness of the Christian revelation.¹ St. Augustine replies that

¹ It is curious to find the expression "Late in time behold Him come" in the famous Methodist Christmas hymn. To us

Jesus was predicted by prophets who outstrip the heathen philosophers in their antiquity. This argument is obviously unsound, and even were it true, it would have no force to-day; yet it apparently told among the wise men of that age, for they seem to have been impressed by it. Let us reckon two things however in our account.

First, it was "not many mighty, not many wise men" who were called. The world after all, then as now, did its thinking second-hand, and far more then than now, since the great mass of mankind was illiterate and did not reason very much about religion. What captivated these plain folk was that here they had a real historical person, who was crucified 'sub Pontio Pilato'—in fact quite a modern character. Nobody knew whether Mithras had ever really lived. Isis and Serapis were equally vague. But here was a real, glowing, living, large-hearted human being, not even an apparition, but real flesh, and he called himself 'The Good Shepherd' and people still alive or not long since dead could tell or had been heard to tell how he had loved and healed them and worked for them—and died for them and was alive for them. That went home to the hearts of the enquirers and won converts from among them, as it has won converts ever since, and will win them still to-day where the Church is faithful enough to proclaim the message clearly.

moderns such an expression can only mean "in the time appointed," "in the fulness of time."

If someone had told these plain people, "Clement or Augustine has defeated the arguments of the philosophers against Jesus," they would have answered, "Of course he has. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we know Him. We desire none other. Do not trouble us with the arguments of Augustine or Clement. They are all very well in their place."

The second point to be reckoned is that not only was Jesus historical, but that apart from Christology and apart from Christian philosophy He was (let us say it reverently) great enough to bear the weight of the Christologies and philosophies that were built upon Him. "Is it any wonder," says an unorthodox writer of our age, "that to this day this Galilaean is too much for our small hearts?" The power and splendour of His Personality, His extraordinary fitness for the role He sought to play, the magnificence of His central theme—the world-wide Kingdom God built up out of living and redeemed finite personalities and cemented together with His own life blood, shed in a kind of Inaugural Sacrifice—these things forbade men to dismiss His claims and title as mere illusion and they forbid us to-day, even after the lapse of wellnigh 2000 years: on the contrary the record bears the stamp of a Reality so grand and splendid that it almost breaks our hearts to think about it. It certainly made our forefathers break their hearts and bend their stubborn wills. If the modern disciples of Jesus do their duty faithfully (but only if they do), will the coming generations also be subject unto Him. His honour is in our hands. Christ is still His own

best witness ; but He employs men as his ambassadors, and assigns to men the task of making His Personality vivid and real to their fellow men, as it is reflected in their own words and deeds.

The Christocentric interpretation of history came then to stay. It was imperilled by Gnosticism and by Arianism and other succeeding heresies, which would all alike have diminished the uniqueness and reality of the Incarnation. In defence, the Church established a series of dogmatic safeguards. The Arian controversy in particular was concerned with the eternal pre-existence of Jesus, or rather of the Logos that in Him became Incarnate. His Personality apart from His body, if an absolute revelation of God, was bound to be co-eternal with God. Hence the tenacity with which the Trinitarians held to their doctrine. An Arian Jesus might have been superseded. Thus Athanasius (*Discourse* II., ch. xxi. 3 and elsewhere) lays great stress on the Pauline text, "other foundation can no man lay, etc." Athanasius' interpretation of Scripture, like that indeed of many of the fathers, often splits hairs, and is not such as would commend itself to the modern world, but his main contention is just, *i.e.* that Jesus is not merely one among many but Monogenes, and Unique. His Absoluteness is an undeniable element in Him because He is Christos. The one Word might have many manifestations, but the Messianic Incarnation is a Unique Act of God.

St. Augustine, especially in his *De Civitate Dei*, has no doubt whatever that there is only one way of looking at the world, *i.e.* that which makes the

Nativity of our Lord the spiritual and moral centre of history. This view won its way in the Mediterranean lands, and with the break-up of the Western Empire in 476, men clung to the Christian community as the one hope left to them amid the ruins of a perishing civilization. Until the year 622 A.D. no one in Europe either east or west had any serious doubt about the absoluteness of Christianity. Then came the rise of Islam with its definite claim to supersede previous revelations. While in some ways it appeared as a shock to the Western Church, especially as its fierce military spirit seemed to threaten Europe with a second break-up of civilization, on the other hand its indebtedness both to Judaism and Christianity tended to make it look rather like a bastard and heretical form of the latter, and so the faith of the multitude was not greatly shaken. Islam appeared to be a devilish perversion of the Catholic Faith, an enemy against whom the warlike and restless youth of Christian Europe might be usefully employed, and whose tenure of the Holy Land must needs come to an end some day, in the providence of God. Christians and Mohammedans moreover shared the Old Testament in common, with its cosmogony and its heroes. Once persuade a Mohammedan to renounce his false prophet and it seemed likely that you could make a good Christian of him. Some of the Saracens were surprisingly tolerant, and even allowed the friars to try their hand at preaching Christianity to their subjects: the Ottoman Turks however were more fanatical.

The real need of a wider setting for Christian doctrine, together with deeper doubts as to its finality may properly be said to enter in with the age which saw the downfall of Constantinople,¹ the revival of the study of Greek literature, the discovery of America, and the astronomical investigations of Galileo. It is remarkable, however, that these events have at first singularly little effect upon theology.

It is undoubtedly the case that from the time of Augustine to that of Aquinas, from him to Calvin, and indeed in orthodox circles up to a much more recent date, there is no trace whatever of any doubt as to the finality of the Christian religion. The incomparable Personality of Jesus is attached to a literary setting containing a cosmogony which is intensely moral, which insists upon the moral government of God, and whose picturesque story of the Fall shows a faithful experience of human life and character so arresting, that in the absence of any rival account it is to be presumed correct in all its details. The result of this is that in the *City of God*, the *Summa Theologica*, and the *Institutes* there is the same unquestioning acceptance of the Old Testament narratives and the same readiness to believe that they contain all the main facts of the past record of the human race. The drama of redemption was so much finer than any other known that it was difficult to picture a serious rival

¹ European thought may be said to begin moving in this direction from the time of the brilliant and heretical Emperor Frederick II.

to it, and even to-day we have no cosmogony in parable form that can compare with the simple dignity and directness of that in the Book of Genesis, although the patience of Sir James Frazer has sought out and set in order many folk-stories of the same primitive character. Aquinas deals with the question: "Would God have become incarnate if there had been no need for redemption?" but he never dreams of asking whether the redemption wrought by Christ is partial, or only valid for part of the human race, or whether there will perhaps be other acts of incarnation in succeeding ages. Between Aquinas and Luther (and I think also a good many Protestant theologians who stand in the following of Luther ¹) there is an important difference, namely, that whereas Aquinas accepts a certain foundation of natural religion, a preliminary knowledge of God as Lord, and Father, and Providential Ruler, Luther states his confidence in the Absoluteness of Christ in so uncompromising a form that he declares that those only who belong to Christ have a God; all others have Him not, nay, know Him not. Calvin, with his intense emphasis upon the total corruption of human nature takes the same line. Communion between man and God is impossible

¹ Larger Catechism of Luther, P. II. 3, p. 460. . . . Quicumque enim extra Christianitatem sunt sive gentiles sive Turcae sive Judaei aut falsi etiam Christiani et hypocritae, quanquam unum tantum et verum deum esse credant et invocent, neque tamen certum habent, quo erga eos animatus sit animo, neque quidquam favori aut gratiae de deo sibi polliceri audent aut possunt, quamobrem in perpetua manent ira et damnatione.

See also Article xiii, and T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, final chapter.

without Christ. "The case," he says, "was certainly desperate, if the Godhead itself did not descend to us, it being impossible for us to ascend . . . neither was the proximity near enough, nor the affinity strong enough, to give us hope that God would dwell with us ; so great was the repugnance between our pollution and the spotless purity of God. Had man remained free from all taint, he was of too humble a condition to penetrate to God without a mediator. What then must it have been, when by fatal ruin he was plunged into death and Hell, defiled by so many stains, made loathsome by corruption ; in fine overwhelmed with every curse ? "

Whether we agree with these great Christian theologians or no, it is difficult to see how they could have come to any different conclusion. The great religions of the East were unknown to them, and the study of biology in any modern sense simply did not exist. Had they been brought face to face with the wider circle of facts they might still have remained Christians and even adherents to the same theology of redemption—or they might not have done. In the absence of the facts they had no alternative course open to them.

It is the modern development of an increasing mass of new information about the unknown which makes the great traditional theologians such difficult reading to-day, and even the lay philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with their larger measure of independence, are handicapped for us in the same way. Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, and the

Caroline Divines—all alike depend upon the same background of Old Testament—and Plutarch. The unhappy modern world is derided for its superior tone in dealing with these giants of the past, and most unfairly. It has discovered the fallibility of documentary chronicles and it cannot pretend to ignore the discovery. As far back as Julius Caesar Scaliger this study of sources was beginning, and even Calvin speaks of some “miscreants” who have begun to doubt the historicity of Moses. Travel, exact surveys of the earth and its contents and laboratory and observatory work have done the rest. The world of thinkers has acquired a certain mass of data, and has rightly deemed itself bound to use it. Try as we may to bridge it, an extraordinary gulf yawns between even the writers of the first 150 years after the Reformation, and the writers of the nineteenth and twentieth century new learning. Erasmus alone seems to show any real kinship with the world of our day.

Not only does the independent observation of nature tend to create a picture of the world which does not harmonise with that tacitly accepted as true by all Christian believers, but it also fosters a feeling of relativity which makes a geocentric revelation with its accompanying certainties much harder to believe in. It does not follow from these wider considerations that the hitherto accepted Christocentric interpretation of history becomes no longer tenable. But it does follow that many of the arguments by which that interpretation has in the past been defended can no longer be used, and

that others seemingly no less convincing but of an entirely different character need to be employed, if it is intended to show that the Absoluteness of Christianity holds good in the face of the very different outlook which the physical and historical sciences have compelled all thoughtful persons to adopt.

The natural result of these tendencies is to produce in the first instance a reaction. Romanticism appeals to sentiment and to intuition, and declares that so beautiful a thing as the Christian religion must inevitably be true and absolute, whatever the rude rationalists may say. This is the picturesque spirit which animates such works as the *Génie* of Chateaubriand, and which in this country produced the Tractarian Movement, whose face is firmly set against all attempts at theological liberalism.¹

This reaction is succeeded in course of time by a more reasonable spirit. It gradually becomes clear that nothing is to be gained by obstinately turning one's back upon facts as they accumulate. The result is a series of efforts at a mediating but liberal theology, developing in some cases into the extremer forms of so-called modernism. Our next task then will be to enquire what attempts have been made by those who to a greater or less degree have accepted the investigations of critical and comparative scholars to establish upon a firm foundation the belief in the Absoluteness of Christianity, and the next section of this book will be concerned with that enquiry.

¹ Cf. "Newman," in *Outspoken Essays*.

CHAPTER IV

ARGUMENTS URGED IN SUPPORT OF THIS CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT

IN forming our estimate as to the absolute finality of the Christian religion we must not leave out of consideration three special points which are urged in its favour :

1. It is urged that the Christian religion is racially wider and more successful in the extent of its appeal than any other.

2. It is urged that it has satisfied more completely than any other religion certain fundamental needs of human nature.

3. It is urged that it has achieved more beneficial results, and has done more to make the earth a better planet than any other religion.

These are very large claims, and they cannot be dismissed lightly or easily. It will therefore be necessary to devote as much patience as we can to their settlement.

I.

It is urged that the Christian religion is racially wider in the extent of its appeal than any other religion.

Now it is not the case that Christians in the aggregate are more numerous than the adherents of any other creed. In point of fact they are a minority of the inhabitants of the earth.¹ Counting heads will give no true or satisfactory picture of the situation.

In the first place vital religion prevails only among a small circle in any nation, and we in England are well aware of the existence in our midst of countless multitudes who, although they have not formally repudiated their belief and are included in the census roll as Christians, would admit if they were pressed, that they did not really believe either in traditional or liberal Christianity, or allow it seriously to influence their conduct, however much social convention compelled them to a formal acquiescence in its rites. All institutional religion runs an equal risk of decaying at the core. Islam it is often said is a better religion to die for than it is to live by, and is weakest in its ancient resorts, and in some of them virtually dead; but this fact, if used as a weapon by Christians is apt to prove double edged. Missionary literature may luxuriate in descriptions of the tottering and decrepit faiths of the pagan world. There is, unfortunately however, tottering and decrepit Christianity in not a few parts of Europe. A Japanese Christian student at Sheffield University said not long ago that when he returned to Japan he was certain to be told: "Now that you have been to England you will have seen for yourself that the religion which the English are trying to introduce into Japan is decadent and does not work in their

¹ See Appendix I for Statistics, p. 160.

own country." He admitted that the remark would be unjust, and that he had found living Christian faith and practice even in Sheffield ; but he urged the necessity of placing his successor (who would probably be an agnostic from Tokyo) with some family of lay Christians who were earning their living in trade or commerce, and who were bearing their witness "without being paid for it." Much as he respected his friends among the English clergy, he felt that their witness was bound to be a professional one, and he had no illusions about the hollowness and effeteness of much traditional Christianity. Even to English people themselves it is a commonplace that the cathedral cities and the parishes with the longest history are only too often the spots where spiritual life is at its lowest ebb and revival is most sorely needed and difficult to secure. The forcible conversion which has accompanied the spread of Islam as well as (in certain unhappy instances) that of Christianity in Russia and parts of Germany, makes it quite certain that the wide acceptance of both beliefs has been due in many cases to no deep conviction at all ; while the mass movements, whether in recent times or in the days when chieftains gave orders to their followers to be baptized by the thousand, have always brought with them the intense peril that men will conform from mere custom and herd instinct.

In the second place, to this day the great bulk of the world's population is at heart more inclined towards animism than anything else. The popular

interest in ancestor-worship, purgatory and invocation of departed saints, cemetery and funeral rites—and in these latter days, spiritualism, is all of one general type. It is certain that parts of the Latin world have never really been Christian. “The pagan, as a rule, did not care to die for his faith just because he had no intention of giving it up. The nomina were changed; the numina remained the same or nearly so. . . . In the East, Christianity seems to have sunk permanently into a mystery-cult, which scarcely attempts to influence conduct, like the popular religions of the East in antiquity. To the superficial observer at any rate it is far more like the old pagan religion in a Christian dress than anything else. . . . What has this kind of religion to do with Jesus Christ?”¹ The universal testimony of students of religion in China, India, Ceylon, Burmah, etc., declares that the popular faith is animism. Nominally, men may be loyal to Confucianism, Brahminism or Buddhism: but the only belief which has any practical issue either in ritual or conduct is the belief either in nature-spirits, or in the cult of departed souls. Islam may creep on dangerously, but it is probable that much of its success is due to the fact that it countenances polygamy, and so disturbs little or nothing of the social fabric of the countries into which it enters, while its almost complete denial of a spiritual status to women is probably (in countries where female education is backward or a negligible factor), more than counterbalanced by the greater

¹ Inge, *The Church and the Age*, ch. 3.

chance it offers them of marrying and bearing children.

It is therefore impossible to take the actual present-day extent of any religion which has ever claimed universal sway as evidence of its absolute truth. Not only is the picture presented by such a census-roll not final, but it is simply an application of the referendum to religion, and is therefore, as far as the total vote is concerned, not a demonstration of what is true, but of what the crowd very likely through a chance set of circumstances has come to prefer. It can hardly be supposed that the kind of secondary and higher education that is being pressed in the world at the present time will make it easy for orthodox Mohammedans to retain their belief in the verbal inspiration of the Koran, and it has already led to agnosticism and the break-up of tradition among the more thoughtful classes in India, China and Japan. But this very same education, while it produces no dismay among the more progressive missionaries, is certain to undermine the teaching which the conservative ones have been in the habit of giving to their converts. It is sadly probable that many of these will in the future have to unlearn much that they have been taught, and that some will lose their faith altogether.¹

¹ Educated Zulus now edit a newspaper in which European Modernism is discussed, and the teaching of the missionaries is criticised. It may be argued that child-races need to be fed with 'milk for babes.' This, however, must be countered by reference to the care with which the religious teaching given to children in England has in recent years been revised, so as to

The real test I would propose in the settlement of this first claim is that we should confine ourselves for the moment simply to the racial appeal of Christianity, and in this connection consider whether there is any race where up to the present the attempt to build character on the basis that Jesus of Nazareth is both its human pattern and its divine inspiration, has proved a conspicuous failure. In itself the absence of such a failure will only be negative evidence. It will always be possible to urge that, given the same opportunities, some other religion may be able to achieve the same result. But on the other hand if we could point only to one conspicuous failure on the part of Christianity we should come very near to endangering its absolute claim. I think, however, that it will not only be found that no such failure can be cited, but that Christianity is far ahead of any other universalist religion not only in its capacity, but also in its sustained enthusiasm for character-building all over the world.

It is remarkable that the altered position of organised Christianity in the modern world has had, on the whole, singularly little adverse effect upon its expansion. After the conversion (real or nominal), of the European nations, there is not much missionary work to the credit of the Latin Church, with the exception of the visit of the friars to China.¹ But with the sixteenth century, just

prevent anything being taught which is intellectually unsound or which the children in after years will come to find was untrue.

¹ I think it is a debatable question whether we can regard the motive of missions as really expressed in the Crusades.

when the perspective begins to alter, we get immense evangelistic activity on the part of the Spaniards, followed in the seventeenth century by that of other nations, and increasing in extent, the nearer we approach to the eighteenth century. It would seem as though the closer we came to the age which most definitely challenged the Christian Weltanschauung, the more vigorous and expansive we found the Christian Church. This has been explained by some historians as due to the natural expansion of the white races, who have spread themselves with alacrity, and have inevitably forced their religion on other people, as part of their general policy of aggression. This seems partly the case, but it would be at once unfair and unsympathetic to set down the whole of post-Reformation missionary activity to the swarming of the Aryans. It is true that the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru employed the old forcible methods of conversion, and that in India Anglicanism about the year 1820 was encouraged "because the principles of the Christian Religion will make the natives more obedient to authority, and so tend to preserve the country under British rule."¹ This exploitation of religion in the interests of Imperialism is not however the spirit of some of the Spanish friars, nor is it that of Carey and Marshman or of Henry Martyn.

Let us now consider in broad outline the position occupied by the Christian standpoint of life in the

¹ I quote this from the records of a Missionary Society of the period.

planet to-day. Leaving on one side first of all the localities occupied by pioneer stations we will survey the prevailing attitude. Taking the world in the flat and working from left to right we notice ¹ that the tip of the Siberian territory, together with a large belt of the northern portion of the American continent stretching from Alaska to Labrador, is predominantly non-Christian with the exception of a few isolated patches in Eastern Siberia, and the chain of communities following the line of the Mackenzie River. Of the islands on this side of the map those of the Pacific show a fairly uniform distribution between Christians and animists, with the exception of New Zealand which is almost entirely Christian, and the Sandwich Islands, which have one third marked as containing a Buddhist population. The mainland of the Americas, from British Columbia to the Labrador coast and from the diocese of Athabasca to the Falkland Islands, is at any rate nominally Christian, with the exception of certain Indian communities in the western half of the United States, and in Brazil and in Patagonia. Latin Christianity is the main factor in the French Canadian provinces, in Mexico, South America, and the West Indies, while it is becoming increasingly powerful in the United States, partly owing to the influx of population. In Greenland the western coast is Christian, the eastern non-Christian. Moving over towards the right it is seen that Europe, including Iceland, is roughly divided between

¹I am referring here to the evidence which lay before the Edinburgh Conference in 1910.

reformed and unreformed Christianity in the proportion of two-fifths to three-fifths ; but it is important to remember in this case, what is true throughout this survey, namely that we are considering territory and not density of population. It is also most important to consider the reaction against the Christian standpoint, and indeed against the religious standpoint as a whole, which is to be seen in many parts of Europe at the moment, and is also prevalent in other continents.

The Mohammedan world stretches in a northeasterly direction from the extreme westerly point of Africa right across that continent taking in Arabia, Asia-Minor, Persia, Turkestan, north-west India and the edge of Siberia. It sends a narrow tongue down the east coast of Africa and includes the bulk of the islands in the Indian Ocean, the Straits Settlements, and various communities in Western China and in Bengal.

Russian Christianity prior to the revolution extended across Siberia right into the far east, but in Siberia followed the line of the river valleys and left the great bulk of the continent untouched. Central and southern Africa are still predominantly non-Christian until we come to Cape Colony, though there is a line of Roman Catholic populations stretching along the western coast. Madagascar is divided in a like proportion.

Buddhism is concentrated in Mongolia, Tibet, further India, Japan, and China, where, in the latter case, it divides the ground with Confucianism. Hinduism in its varied aspects, and especially as a

structure of society, is still dominant from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

The Philippines are mainly Latin in their allegiance. New Guinea is still for the most part non-Christian. Australia, although the majority of its population may be regarded as at any rate nominally Christian, still shows a good deal of territory in the interior where the black-fellow remains untouched, though it must be remembered that the population is thin, and that large areas are entirely uninhabited.

Side by side with this survey should be placed one showing the relative density of population, from which, as well as from the consideration of the part played in history by the various existing races, the reader must judge for himself something of the importance of the different religions in promoting the welfare of the planet.

A word or two of caution however is here necessary.

i. The map as an accurate guide is generally misleading. The reader will probably turn to the Edinburgh Missionary Atlas of 1910. Yet this at its best can only give an *approximate* notion of how things stand, while in the diagram showing the distribution of mission-stations it is hopelessly out of date, owing to the closing of many which prior to 1914 were in the hands of Germans or Austrians.

ii. Although Mohammedanism does not seem a helpful factor in the spiritual and intellectual progress of the countries where it prevails, it must be admitted that (1) when it was new it presented considerable advantages over the debased and corrupt Christianity which it succeeded, (2) climatic

and economic conditions can hinder any organised religion from doing itself justice, and the Christian communities existing within the Moham-medan area to-day do not seem to make a vast success of their Christianity, though their tenacity in adherence to its dogmas is most remarkable.

(3) Mohammedanism as a missionary force still shows considerable potency in Africa, where it is dealing with degrading forms of Animism and Polytheism, and can only there successfully be rivalled by Christianity, which has a harder task owing to the higher demands it makes upon its disciples.

iii. It is also difficult to deny that a considerable amount of organised and conventional Christianity differs in its vital effects on character very little from other organised religions.

Turning to the actual pioneer activities of the Christian church, it is impossible to gainsay the fact that these are now more vigorous than they have been at any time perhaps since the second century ; and when we remember that the greatest victories of conversion during the past hundred years have been won entirely by persuasion, while those achieved in the centre of Europe a thousand years ago were only too often the result of pressure, if not of military violence, the missionary operations of recent years stand out as of the most striking importance.¹

¹ The accusation of bribery is ungenerous. Whose motives can ever be said to be *wholly* unmixed ? Certainly the early followers of Our Lord were not wholly disinterested, yet He accepted and used them, and was able to see the higher motives

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The three great areas of pioneer activity are of course, Africa, India, and the Far East, and in these the mission stations lie on the map as thick as sand.

The statistics of the Edinburgh Conference in 1910 are enough in themselves to convince of this. Thus in Japan these show of non-Roman workers, 1034 actual non-Japanese missionary agents, 2140 Japanese workers, 97 head stations, 1146 sub-stations, seven colleges of university standard, and 70 boarding and high schools: of Roman Catholic workers 145 European priests, 33 native priests, 99 lay brothers, 363 sisters, and 309 catechists, with 242 stations and 41 schools.

In India the figures are: of non-Roman workers, 4614 foreign agents, 35,767 native-born workers, 780 head-stations, 10,247 sub-stations, 37 colleges of university standard, and 576 high schools: of Roman workers 1049 European priests, 1755 native priests, 517 lay brothers, 2933 sisters, 1165 catechists, with 4677 stations and 3636 schools.

I do not pretend that these figures are more than approximate, but they are evidence of enormous activity. Trouble is taken to distribute the forces of the Christian Church in such a way as to build outposts among peoples of every shade of race and dialect, to secure from each its spiritual contribution, and to permeate the whole life of the world with the spiritual concepts of Jesus Christ. The influence in them conflicting with the lower. Christians ought nevertheless sedulously to avoid any action which can be interpreted as the offer of a bribe, even if it be social or educational advancement as the motive for conversion.

ence of missionary institutions is out of all proportion to their size. No other power exists or has existed which has so successfully drawn conflicting nationalities into a working unity and levelled away racial inequalities.

Far more wonderful, however, than the combined attack upon the non-Christian world in its strongest citadels is the remarkable care for the backward and neglected races, as well as for the taming of savage ones. The civilising influences of the monks of the west are familiar to most readers of medieval history. It is worth noting however that their achievements have been eclipsed by the labours of the last hundred years. We have the remarkable work done among the diminishing tribes of the North American Indians, the devoted labours of Father Damien among the lepers, and of Mary Slessor among the degraded Africans of the Calabar coast. We have the romantic stories of Livingstone and Moffatt, and the growth of the Universities' Mission in Central Africa. There is the almost miraculous conversion of the bloodthirsty Baganda and the heroic episcopate of Patterson. Arch-deacon Batchelor's work among the Ainu, and that of Bishop Bompas in the Yukon will live for many a century. Nowhere has a child-race existed, but the emissaries of Christ have swept it up into His garner, and have championed it against aggressive commercialism or unscrupulous politicians.

The evangelistic policy of the last hundred years then has set itself the task of making the life of Jesus of Nazareth the standard of human conduct

all the world over, and the Person of Jesus the universal centre of love and inspiration, while the conception of the whole planet as a commonwealth of peoples owning His sovereignty is at the back of all conferences aiming at the increase of Christian unity and fraternal feeling, and has outstripped the modern covenant of the League of Nations in workability. The net result has been striking. Failures of course there have been, weak spots in the line of advance, mistakes in the scheme of organisation. In spite of these qualifications however it is surely a remarkable scientific fact that it has been possible to win Christian allegiance and to build Christian character in practically every corner of the globe. A common standard of morals, a common loyalty in prayer and spiritual aim unites Indians, Negroes, Anglo-Saxons and Spanish Americans in the New World, gives equal dignity and prominence to the primitive Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco and the white settlers of the Argentine, as well as to the fast-vanishing Ainu and his virile conqueror the Japanese, and links in a far-flung unity the Karens of Burma, the Eskimo, the Malagasy, the Papuan, and the Tibetan of the western frontier of China. Numerically the ground is not covered, nor can we expect it to be within the bounds of a reasonable prediction. Racially it is almost covered already. No other religion making universal claims has ever achieved results in any way approaching these. And not only is the Christian enterprise widely extended but it is carried into the heart of the countries in which the great

non-Christian faiths seemingly prevail. The influence of the Christian population in India is altogether out of proportion to its numbers, and its ideals are accepted by many who are reluctant to acknowledge their source.

In China the first President of the Republic was a Christian, while both in China and Japan some of the best public service in the state is performed by educated Christians. In China the student class is coming increasingly under Christian influences, and has endeavoured recently to insist on a high and clean moral standard in politics. The enormous progress in morals and culture made by various African races under the influence of the Church tends to obscure the fact that the vast proportion of Africans are still heathen, but the witness of character borne by the best in Uganda, Zululand, Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, as well as in the great inland territories of Rhodesia should convince the severest critic that the African, to whatever tribe he may belong, has at least as much natural genius for Christianity as the people of any other continent.

On the whole then the Christian religion would seem to have achieved a more universal conquest than any other hitherto recorded. The judicially minded person will, however, establish against this the possibility of a still more successful catholic religion coming into existence, and will put in a query as to the staying power of organised Christianity, pointing out that in the countries where it has been longest established its vital influence is

disproportionately weak. He will no doubt draw our attention to the relatively small amount of evangelistic work undertaken by the huge pre-revolution Church in Russia, whose only great achievement, if we except the expansion of Russian Christianity in Siberia, was the personal one due under providence to the saintly Archbishop Nicolai in Japan, and he will also remind us of the collapse of the North African Church under the Vandals, and of the almost complete disappearance of the Nestorian Churches of the Far and Middle East, in spite of their great missionary zeal.

Against these latter criticisms of the staying power of Christianity one would urge:—

1. The very cream of Russian Christianity will probably be found to have survived the revolutionary excesses.

2. African and Nestorian Christianity was far from evenly-balanced, and was divided by bitter feuds, as well as lacking in centralisation.

3. Christianity as a whole shows a power, so far unique among religions, of revival and recovery. Its renewals of spirit by return to the influence and contemplation of the Spirit of Jesus are its most wonderful feature. Other religions have had their revivals, but none of such purity and brilliancy, since no other religion possesses so wonderful a Personal Centre.

Contrast this record with that of Islam. The Arab civilisation of the Middle Ages, magnificent as it is both in its art and science, is nevertheless Arab and not Catholic, and Islamic civilisation in

general has never been in essence opposed to slavery or sex-inequality. The progress of Islam has been markedly unsuccessful in countries with a temperate climate. It has never made any great pioneer movement towards the new world, although its offshoot Babism was not long ago added to the number of fancy cults practised in the United States. A map of the Mohammedan world gives a superficial impression of extended sovereignty, but a closer examination of it reveals the fact that the greater part of its territory is desert with a scanty population, and that the thickly populated Mohammedan areas are virtually eight, *i.e.* Morocco, Northern Nigeria, Egypt and the shores of the Red Sea, Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, Turkestan, the Punjab, Bengal, and Java. Islam is not the religion of the progressive peoples, and is a negligible quantity in China and Japan.¹

I have refrained from dealing with Islamic doctrine in isolation, since its dependence both upon Judaism and upon Christianity is too generally admitted for it to be regarded as a separate entity.

The relation of Buddhism to Christianity, however, is one which deserves more detailed treatment since (1) in origin it is wholly independent,² (2) the writers of the various comparative treatises to which reference is made in this volume express their preference for Christianity in such brief terms

¹ See appendix to this section, on Mohammedanism in Africa.

² This must be frankly admitted, however much Northern Buddhism and Japanese Amidhaism may betray signs of Christian influence.

that in the interests of justice it is needful to show at some greater length the evidence on which their judgments are based, and even to some extent to qualify them.

We will first quote a recent sympathetic description of the teaching of the founder of Buddhism :

“ The fundamental teaching of Gautama as it is now being made plain to us by the study of original sources, is clear and simple and in the closest harmony with modern ideas. It is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known. We have what are almost certainly the authentic heads of his discourse to the five disciples which embodies his essential doctrine.

“ All the miseries and discontents of life he traces to insatiable selfishness. Suffering, he teaches, is due to the craving individuality, to the torment of greedy desire. Until a man has overcome every sort of personal craving his life is trouble and his end sorrow. There are three principal forms the craving of life takes, and all are evil. The first is the desire to gratify the senses, sensuousness. The second is the desire for personal immortality. The third is the desire for prosperity, worldliness. All these must be overcome—that is to say, a man must no longer be living for himself—before life can become serene. But when they are indeed overcome and no longer rule a man's life, when the first personal pronoun has vanished from his private thoughts, then he has reached the higher wisdom, Nirvāna, serenity of soul. For Nirvāna does not

mean, as many people wrongly believe, extinction, but the extinction of the futile personal aims that necessarily make life base or pitiful or dreadful.

“Now here, surely, we have the completest analysis of the problem of the soul’s peace. Every religion that is worth the name, every philosophy, warns us to lose ourselves in something greater than ourselves. ‘Whosoever would save his life, shall lose it’; there is exactly the same lesson.

“The teaching of history, as we are unfolding it in this book, is strictly in accordance with this teaching of Buddha. There is, as we are seeing, no social order, no security, no peace or happiness, no righteous leadership or kingship, unless men lose themselves in something greater than themselves. The study of biological progress again reveals exactly the same process—the merging of the narrow globe of the individual experience in a wider being (compare what has been said in chaps. xii. and xvii.). To forget oneself in greater interests is to escape from a prison.

“The self-abnegation must be complete. From the point of view of Gautama, that dread of death, that greed for an endless continuation of his mean little individual life which drove the Egyptian and those who learnt from him with propitiations and charms into the temple, was as mortal and ugly and evil a thing as lust of avarice or hate. The religion of Gautama is flatly opposite to the ‘immortality’ religions. And his teaching is set like flint against asceticism, as a mere attempt to win

personal power by personal pains.”¹ The writer goes on to point out that Gautama had no knowledge or vision of history, and that his mind was concerned with the ideas of his age and people, with notions of a perpetual recurrence, of world following world and of Buddha following Buddha ; a stagnant circling of the universe. The positive remedy for the evil of life is held to consist in the Noble Eight-fold Path, whose stages are :—

Right Views.

Right Aspirations.

Right Speech.

Right Conduct.

Right Livelihood.

Right Effort.

Right Mindfulness.

Right Rapture.

It is held in this description that Gautama taught love of intellectual truth, love for the service of others, avoidance of self-consciousness and the uselessness of much that goes by the name of religious devotion.

It may readily be admitted that Gautama is indeed one of the great moral teachers and prophets that the world has produced, and one can find no serious fault with Prof. Reischauer when he says : “ There is a ring of sincerity and practicality about the words of the Buddha which one misses in the speculative systems of many religious teachers. The Buddha speaks from experience and while we may not agree with his interpretation of life and his

¹ Wells, *The Outline of History*, ch. xxvi.

way of salvation, we cannot help but feel that he was dead in earnest in his quest and honest in his solution of life's problem which he offered to the people of India. The two extremes which man is to avoid . . . are present with us to-day. Life indeed is an art, and very few can strike the balance between using the things of sense without abusing them. . . . This discovery of the Buddha is a commonplace truth to us moderns, though the actual walking in the middle path of sane moderation seems almost as difficult to-day as it did to the ancients. . . . Whether the general run of disciples followed the Buddha in his great solution of metaphysical problems or not, they could understand his practical ethical teachings which after all were the main purpose of his religion. The Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path, was a true way of deliverance from the lower passions and the coarser sins ; and to the extent that India walked in this way, to that extent, it was a better India. . . . The Buddha's religion was undoubtedly the best of its day. It delivered men from the fears and superstitions of a gross polytheism and demonology and taught kindness and a way of moderation to all." ¹

But when all this has been said it behoves us to remind ourselves that there is a good deal also to be said on the other side.

In the first place, while I think it is right to admit with Mr. Wells that Gautama did grasp the need for the soul to lose itself in something greater than itself in order to attain serenity and peace,

¹ Reischauer, *Studies in Japanese Buddhism*, chap. i.

I cannot help feeling that Mr. Wells makes Gautama too Christian. However much we may (quite rightly) concede, after the manner of the Alexandrine fathers the working of the Divine Logos in Buddha, as also in Socrates and Confucius, it is impossible to elevate Buddha to the position of a Christian mystic. In his denunciation of self-consolation he may resemble St. Thomas à Kempis or Blessed Henry Suso, but his view of the universe is radically different from that of the Christian.¹

In the second place, while we may give Buddhism credit for a considerable civilising influence, and for encouraging gentleness, it must be remembered that if it extinguishes hatred, it also extinguishes affection. It seeks to put out the fire of passion. But if we understand Christianity aright it proclaims that the fire of sensual passion is a misdirection of something not in itself evil and seeks to replace wrong passion by right passion and pre-eminently by a passionate devotion to a Divine Personal Saviour.

In the third place, Gautama would seem to have been primarily interested in the salvation of humanity rather than in steadily thinking his position clear through.² He is almost as free as Confucius from interest in the ultimate reality which lies behind phenomena.

In the fourth place the denial of the reality of the self by Gautama seems strange, at any rate to the Western mind. Western logic suggests that if the belief in the reality of the self is an illusion, it must be an illusion to something or someone ;

¹ See Höffding, p. 345, *op. cit.*

² Reischauer, *op. cit.*

and what is that something or someone? And still further, if the Enlightened One knows that the belief in the existence of the ego is an illusion, then what, or who, is it that knows this? Reischauer is inclined to believe that the Buddha not only did not think his position clear through, but also did not absolutely deny the existence of a "something" that knows, which we have a perfect right to call the true or higher self.

The problem as to the true interpretation of this important part of the Buddha's teaching may be illustrated from the loosely constructed modern philosophy which calls itself Christian Science. According to this philosophy evil is an illusion, and blessedness is to be obtained by seeing that it is an illusion. The more completely anyone realises the non-existence of evil, the healthier and happier does he become. Now this absolute statement seems clean contrary to general experience, however useful it may be in the treatment of nervous diseases. But when the teacher of Christian Science is pressed to explain what he means by saying that evil is unreal, he declares that the words "real" and "unreal" are equivalent to "permanent" and "transitory," "eternal" and "temporal." He says that when he declares that evil is non-existent he means that it is impermanent and temporary. It is therefore to be disregarded by all who seek to be in tune with the infinite, and to experience eternal life, here and now.¹ Now this use of the word

¹ If this explanation is a sincere one (and not a quibble), and for my own part I should like to be able to believe that it is

“real” is closely akin to its use by the Buddha. The Buddha’s three foundation doctrines are:—

1. All individual existence is impermanent.
2. Suffering is caused by the desire for individual existence and all that goes with it.
3. Therefore to be free from suffering one must train oneself to cease from desiring that which is transitory.

It is perfectly clear that this doctrine of the futility of self-seeking bears considerable resemblance to the teaching of Christ, but I do not think that it can be denied that the plain and natural interpretation of the doctrine for Easterns is conditioned by a radical pessimism which declares that life upon earth cannot be improved so as to become endurable, and therefore the right thing to do is to end it.

It is desirable at this point to consider the Buddhist ideal of Nirvāna. So widespread is the popular belief that it is equivalent to the extinction of the individual, that it seems best to quote the considered judgment of Prof. A. S. Geden, who as tutor in a Wesleyan Methodist college, will hardly be suspected

sincere, then the objection to the philosophical basis of Christian Science must rest less on its irrational doctrines than on its amazing perversion of words from their natural meanings. In practice it simply becomes the application to everyday life of Romans, viii. 18 to end, which has always been a favourite one with Protestants. It would be unchristian to deny the genuine beauty of much Christian Scientist practice and conduct. The movement in my judgment is developing doctrinally to an immense extent, and will probably in the end drop most of its absurdities and merge into the larger life of Catholic Christianity.

I am informed that some Christian Scientists repudiate this interpretation of the word real, and incline to the view of evil upheld I think by Bosanquet, *i.e.* that it is *our* misinterpretation of good due to our imperfect vision.

of being deficient in loyalty to the Christian standpoint. He says :—" The external and individual means by which alone this wisdom (*i.e.* knowledge of how to get free from existence) can be apprehended is intense concentration of mind and thought. This was of course a familiar Indian device, and no novelty as taught by Gautama. Every man must for himself assimilate the truths proclaimed, must work out his own salvation, must practise the meditation and self-culture which alone can lead to inward peace and deliverance from the bondage of karma and re-birth. He who has reached this state, wherein desire and lust have ceased to have power over him, and no renewal of existence will accordingly take place after death, is said to have attained *nirvāna*, a restful untroubled state, in which there is no more present or prospective misery and pain. To gain *nirvāna* was the goal which the Buddha set before his followers as the supreme end of their efforts and longings. It was clearly an end attainable in the present life. Gautama himself professed to be in enjoyment of *nirvāna*, and in the sacred books a similar claim is made for many of his early disciples. To define more closely and to expound in psychological terms the nature of *nirvāna* is not easy. The word signifies literally 'blown out'; that is, the fire of lust, the clinging to existence is extinguished. But in reality *nirvāna* is as highly technical a term as is to be found in the entire vocabulary of Buddhism; and upon its precise meaning and content much has been written. What *nirvāna* is not, however, can at once and very simply be

stated. It is not extinction or annihilation; the latter idea is as foreign and inconceivable to Buddhist thought as it would be to modern science, although of course on different grounds. Neither is it a condition of mere trance or dreamless repose in which all the activities of the body and mind are suspended. Either definition is incompatible with the claim to the enjoyment of *nirvāna* in the present life. But it is that condition of being in which all actions are performed without 'clinging' or 'attachment'; in which therefore no fruits of action are produced, karma is inoperative, and after their dissolution no recombination of the elemental groups can occur. The Buddhist saint who has attained *nirvāna* still acts and thinks. But his actions and thoughts end with themselves, and there is no aftermath.... Beyond *nirvāna*... there is a further and final emancipation which can only be reached at and through death. This is *parinirvāna*, or complete *nirvāna*.... From the yoke of sensation, perception, predisposition, and consciousness, . . . deliverance may be obtained in the present life . . . the last link with an organised body is dissolved in death . . . and there is no reconstitution into a conscious, sentient being." The dew-drop, in fact, sinks into the shining sea, and once it has lost its individuality, it is of no further importance to it whether that sea be one of existence or non-existence.

Prof. Geden adds further :—

"On broader grounds . . . it is doubtful whether so stern and unyielding a doctrine as this, a doctrine that holds out no promise of future happiness, but

only the incessant renewal of the hard conflict with self until conscious life comes to an end in darkness, can ever have captured the mind and heart of the people, or been the theme and text of a popular and successful ministry, such as Gautama is represented as exercising. The ideas and definitions implied were of too abstract and metaphysical a nature to commend themselves to popular thought or belief. They represent more probably a later development of the study and the cloister, thrown back upon the time of the Buddha, which it was then sought to invest with the authority of antiquity. And if so his attitude may have been really agnostic, refusing to speculate on a subject about which he had no definite or certain information to give. *Nirvāna*, in the sense expounded by the books, holds out no sufficient attraction to be the inspiring force of a great and enduring religious movement, such as Buddhism proved itself to be. And therefore in the later developments of doctrine and faith, especially in the Northern School, the conception of *nirvāna* was extended and elaborated into that of a real paradise, a happy state after death, the privilege and reward of a saintly life here upon earth, lived in obedience to the precepts and moral standards which Buddhism enjoined. Apart also from such development, which brought Buddhist teaching with regard to the future into touch with the deepest longings and consciousness of the human heart, it is hardly conceivable that Buddhism should ever have become a popular faith or exercised a wide and lasting influence."

Another student of Buddhist doctrine, Prof. Rhys Davids, concludes in a slightly different way:—"What then is *nirvāna*, which means simply 'going out,' 'extinction'? (it being quite clear, from what has gone before, that this cannot be the extinction of a soul). It is the extinction of that sinful, grasping condition of mind and heart, which would otherwise, according to the great mystery of karma, be the cause of renewed individual existence. That extinction is to be brought about by, and runs parallel with, the growth of the opposite condition of mind and heart; and it is complete when that opposite condition is reached. *Nirvāna* is therefore the same thing as a sinless calm state of mind; and if translated at all, may best perhaps, be rendered 'holiness'—holiness that is in the Buddhist sense, perfect peace, goodness, and wisdom. . . . Our word holiness will often suggest the ideas of love to, and awe in the felt presence of a personal creator—ideas inconsistent with Buddhist holiness. On the other hand *nirvāna* implies the idea of intellectual energy coupled with the cessation of individual existence; of which the former is not essential to, and the latter is quite unconnected with our idea of holiness. Holiness and *nirvāna* in other words may represent states of mind not greatly different; but these are due to different causes, and end in different results. . . . Now when a Buddhist has become an Arahāt or perfect man and has reached *nirvāna* . . . he is still alive . . . his body with all its powers remains. These, however, are impermanent

and will soon pass away . . . the Arahāt will be no longer alive or existent in any sense at all. . . . He will go out like the flame of a lamp, and his karma will be individualised no longer." It is worth noting that modern Buddhists class Christianity as the third of the ten errors or evil states of mind, *i.e.* "dependence upon works," while a Buddhist writer of the middle ages regarded it as the sixth error, *i.e.* "love of life on earth."

I do not think it is necessary to suppose that the Buddhist metaphysics had to be softened down immediately in order to meet human needs. Life to many in India has never had the attraction that it has for the Western peoples. A hot climate, with its accompaniments of fierce growth and equally fierce decay, its plague, its poverty, and its suffering, creates a pessimistic mood which looks upon life as something evil from which to be freed, rather than a game to be played to the end and won if possible.

5. It is impossible not to feel that Gautama's interest is in salvation rather than in the pursuit of truth. This may seem curious, seeing that he makes right views, right effort, and right mindfulness elements in the path of salvation. What lay at the end of the road he was not concerned with, and indeed he felt speculation on this subject to be a hindrance rather than a help. He gives us a list of what he calls the Great Indeterminates, the chief of which are :—

Whether the world in its real substance is eternal or not.

Whether the world is infinite or not.

Whether the soul is the same as the body or different from it.

Whether a man exists in any way or not after death.

One definite belief he did take over from contemporary Indian thought, namely the doctrine of the universal reign of the law of cause and effect. There is, to the thinkers of his day, a mysterious tendency—energy, known as karma, which passes over from one individual life to another and builds up a new individual again when the old individual is dissolved in death. But karma is not a soul, it is simply a kind of blind will to be, and the object of the process of salvation is to stop it from building up any new individuals.¹

6. Gautama was not a thoroughgoing atheist but an agnostic. The god of the higher Hinduism was a great veiled being, too remote from the needs of the human race to be of any real help to it, while the gods of popular mythology were little better than overgrown men and women. Man in fact, according to the view of Gautama, has to work out his own salvation with patience and persistency.

It is clear then that however remarkable a contribution to the study of the meaning of life Buddhism may appear, in its undiluted form it can not be a serious competitor with Christianity. It remains to notice some other contrasts and similarities to which attention has at various times been drawn.

¹ See chap. vii. appendix i.

Both Buddhism and Christianity have no national limits. Their mission is to humanity, and they aim at bringing redemption and healing to all mankind. Yet Buddhism has only been effectively missionary by adopting the methods and to some extent the doctrines of the Christian Church. (See Lloyd's *The Creed of half Japan*.) Both Gautama and Jesus rejected current forms of asceticism, and equally both rejected the ordinary life of their day. Gautama, however, created a new asceticism whose end was negative, and no true Buddhist could avoid becoming either a monk or a nun. Jesus, on the other hand, in creating a new asceticism, threw it open to all, and where it is true to type, the Christian life, whether married or celibate, is frugal but most emphatically not manichæan in its handling of the material world. The disciples of Jesus are not of two classes, the one superior to the other. They are of two classes different in kind and purpose but not in degree, and whatever their status they live "as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." The Buddhist is to leave home, wife, child and comfort, for his own soul's sake. The Christian is to leave them for the sake of the Kingdom of God, and in the Kingdom to find them again. It is in this doctrine of the Kingdom that we find an essential difference between Buddhist and Christian ethics. The Buddhist adheres to the Noble Eightfold Path, not as the builder of a positive commonwealth, but in order to reach *nirvāna*. The Christian seeks to build character in order to advance the completion of the

Divine Commonwealth. He has therefore a much greater dynamic force at his disposal than the Buddhist. It is not surprising to find that Buddhism has done little or nothing to improve social conditions. Jesus taught that evil was not physical existence but moral evil, and His aim is the perfect community of souls. "Buddha," says Abp. Söderblom, "sings a cradle song over the strivings, the faith and hope of human life. His gospel is aristocratic and suits best a class of educated folk, blasé and disillusioned. Jesus, on the other hand, gives us the most powerful, keen, unbelievable and yet realisable faith in *Life* that the world has ever seen."

NOTE.—There is a real danger that Christianity as the Gospel of Self-Assertiveness may be preached in opposition to the self-renouncing ethics of Buddhism. I seem to see traces of this in Herr Houston Chamberlain's treatment of the subject (*Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*). His Christ is a Nietzschean Christ, as much like a Pan-German as Archd. Paige-Cox's Christian is like a Heaven-born Englishman. We need to remember that the Divine Logos prophesying through Gautama and manifested in Jesus sets a higher value on the virtues of gentleness and self-restraint than does the masterful Indo-German.

APPENDIX I

ALTERNATIVE STATISTICS OF RELIGIONS

I. ABP. SÖDERBLOM OF UPSALA (Pre-war figures).

Population of world	-	-	-	1,630,000,000
Christians	-	-	-	591,000,000
Buddhists	-	-	-	125,000,000
Mohammedans	-	-	-	235,000,000
Animists	-	-	-	121,000,000

Shintoists	-	-	-	-	-	18.7 millions.
Jews	-	-	-	-	-	10,000,000
Hindus	-	-	-	-	-	219,000,000
Confucianists and Taoists	-	-	-	-	-	271,000,000

2. DR. WEITBRECHT STANTON (Survey in 1920).

Population of world	-	-	-	-	-	1,646,000,000
Christians	-	-	-	-	-	564,000,000
Confucianists and Taoists	-	-	-	-	-	300,000,000
Mohammedans	-	-	-	-	-	221,000,000
Hindus	-	-	-	-	-	210,000,000
Animists	-	-	-	-	-	158,000,000
Buddhists	-	-	-	-	-	138,000,000
Shintoists	-	-	-	-	-	25,000,000
Jews	-	-	-	-	-	12,000,000

NOTE TO STATISTICS.

There is a serious danger in the appeal to numbers. While the racial fitness of Christianity seems undeniable, it must not lead us to suppose that it will of necessity be accepted by the majority of the inhabitants of every people upon this planet. The highest and most salutary truth is far from being the one which everybody likes. The best principles of medical science and hygiene are held and practised to-day by a mere fraction of the inhabitants of the earth. Truth for truth's sake is still unpopular as compared with the love of smooth things. The best art, the best music, the soundest reasoning, the purest morals, are not treasures which make a universal appeal or even an appeal to the majority, and it is difficult to believe that they will ever do so.

APPENDIX II

THE REV. J. H. HARRIS'S SURVEY OF THE
EFFECTS OF MOHAMMEDANISM IN AFRICA

ON MARRIAGE.

It is alleged that polygamy leads to an increased birth-rate.

Answer.—(a) So far as the negro and negroid populations are concerned, the most populous areas are monogamistic.

(b) The rate of increase is determined by the woman and not by the man.

(c) In Griqualand a census showed that the monogamists had more children than the polygamists.

(d) In Natal and other parts of S. Africa monogamy and not polygamy is the rule.

ON EDUCATION.

In the education of the African race Mohammedanism has done infinitely less than the forces of the Christian faith, and this despite the fact that from every point of view Mohammedanism has held all the strategic advantages for over one thousand years. This is the more surprising because, as Lord Milner so truly says: "In the theory of Mohammedanism, piety and learning go hand in hand."¹

In Egypt and the Sudan one finds the fullest development of Mohammedan educational activity. Lord Milner points out, however, the lethargy which has overtaken the Mohammedan educational system.

"The famous Mosque of El-Azhar at Cairo was a University and a centre of Eastern culture for some hundred years before the oldest European Universities were founded. And to the present day it still enjoys incomparably the greatest prestige of any seat of learning in the Moslem world. But so far as real knowledge and education goes, El-Azhar is, if not dead, at least a dormant institution. The old Arab erudition, related alike in substance and in method to that of Europe during the Middle Ages, has met with the fate which would have befallen European culture, had it not been breathed upon and revived in the Renaissance by the spirit of Ancient Greece."

Throughout Africa, North, East, West and South, almost to the equatorial line, are to be found the Mohammedan Ulema, to whom education is little more than the necessity of teaching a little reading, less writing, but the supreme necessity of memorizing unintelligible and indigestible

¹ *England in Egypt*, by Lord Milner.

portions of the Koran. It is neither education nor a foundation upon which a system of education, rightly understood, may be erected.

II

It is urged that Christianity has satisfied certain fundamental needs of human nature more completely than any other religion.

The chief exponent of this proposition was the late Dr. J. N. Figgis of the Community of the Resurrection. In his famous Hulsean Lectures he endeavoured to show that the God-story centreing round Jesus of Nazareth met the needs of the world to their supreme satisfaction in respect of four things: (a) It was something given and revealed from above, not worked out by man from below, a visitation more than a discovery. (b) It had an element of mystery about it, soaring above the heights of human reason, and appealing to the romantic rather than the rationalist element, and in that the former is more widely distributed than the latter it was and is essentially the plain man's religion. (c) It is based on homely and historical fact, and is therefore far more suited to the minds of the great mass of simple folk than a religion based on vague abstractions. (d) It has always brought forgiveness to all who need it, and since it cannot be denied that all have in some measure come short of the ideal of what they might have been, the assurance of pardon and renewal is the most precious gift that the Christian doctrine of God has to offer.

The charm and beauty of Dr. Figgis's sermons can hardly be exaggerated and there must be many who have gained comfort and inspiration from reading and re-reading them, but it is difficult to believe that their brilliant author, with his extraordinary knowledge of contemporary literature and his length of view, would not, if he had been spared to us for another decade, have lived to modify a good many of his statements. He was not sympathetic to the clear-cut conservatism of the Petropauline school,¹ and although his own studies lay rather in the realm of church history than of biblical criticism he was too careful a scholar not to have appreciated the caution of those who are unwilling to surrender what seems to them a legitimate belief, for the sake of a narrower uniformity.

The argument based upon human needs is a singularly dangerous one to handle. We have already seen that Islam is put forward by some persons as worthy of universal acceptance, because they maintain that its dogmatic basis is simple, that its lower and more attainable moral standard keeps the general level of conduct higher, and that its sanction of polygamy is not only well adapted to hot climates but also, if extended, would do away with prostitution all over the world, increase the birth-rate where it is needed, and abolish the morbid phenomena of spinsterhood. The counter arguments to this latter contention have been set forth by Mr. J. H. Harris, they will be found in the

¹ See his review of Fr. Knox's *Some Loose Stones* in the *Interpreter*, 1913.

appendix to the previous chapter, and need not be quoted here. The main fact, however, to be emphasised, is that it by no means follows that because some doctrine or institution meets an almost universal human craving it is therefore good, or of divine origin, or unsurpassable. It is necessary to show what needs it meets. Human needs are undoubtedly met by the state provision of maisons tolérées and totalisators. It is not surprising to find a more recent Christian thinker Mr. J. K. Mozley taking the opposite standpoint and insisting that the apologists of the second century argued that the Gospel was true, and that human needs must adapt themselves to that fact, and in another passage: "The Christian Church keeps on saying: 'These things happened': 'These things are true': and that they are important not because they will make you happy or answer to your needs, but because nothing you can do or feel can make them other than they are. The Church has never said that you may believe anything because you like it any more than it has said that you may do anything because you like it. Happiness is not the *end* of belief, just as it is not the *end* of action. But those who have believed have been happy and have found their needs met." ¹ There is much more in this essay of Mr. Mozley's which I have not space to quote here, but his general contention links up in a curious way with that of a thinker who approaches the matter from an almost opposite pole of thought. Whereas Mr. Mozley plainly accepts the orthodox view of

¹ J. K. Mozley, *The Achievements of Christianity*, p. 27.

the Christian Church that the truths which it asserts to be truths are true quite apart from the attitude of men towards them, Mr. Clutton Brock equally insists that we cannot possibly understand what is meant by the Kingdom of God as long as we continue emphasising those points in Christ's doctrine of it which seem to minister to our needs. Reality is the Kingdom of Heaven. But reality is not necessarily anthropocentric, any more than the sun's object is geocentric.¹ It was necessary for Galileo to contemplate the sun as an object in itself, and without any thought of its use to man, in order to discover its true relation to the earth.

Reverting then to Dr. Figgis, it may be said with regard to (a) and (b) his first two points that it certainly is an argument for Christianity that it is greater than our own mere puny experience could have evolved. We might reasonably regard with suspicion the god of a religion which fitted our earth-bound conditions too perfectly. The fact that this planet is only a tiny corner of the Kingdom of God, and that its finite ends are but a fraction of all the purposes which cross and interweave within the measureless boundaries of that realm inevitably introduces an element of mystery into our conception of the universe. "Then thought I to understand this, but it was too high for me." It may be questioned, however, whether the desire of the natural man for an infallible revelation delivered for his passive acceptance with all the terrifying accompaniments of a volcanic eruption

¹ "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?", p. 49.

is exactly a Christian desire. The notion of revelation as God-given does indeed lay stress upon a valuable truth, *i.e.* that no amount of evidence of the existence of the religious consciousness would suffice to support faith if the consciousness was that merely of a silent and unresponsive deity. Such a deity could hardly be said to exist or at any rate concern us much. It is a misuse of terms to call that a conversation between two persons in which one of them is silent, and although therefore it is impossible to conceive of any personal intercourse between God and man which excludes experience, it is equally impossible to conceive of religion without revelation. One might as well try to talk to a stone-deaf man in the dark and call the result a dialogue. But, though we may grant that the element of mystery is present in revelation, it is there not to feed a human weakness or to overawe the human soul into submission but as the result of human limitation and sin. Let us once again hear Dr. Inge :—¹

“ It is not too much to say that the whole edifice of supernaturalistic dualism under which Catholic piety has sheltered itself for 1500 years has fallen in ruins to the ground. There is still enough superstition left to win a certain vogue for miraculous cures at Lourdes and split hailstones at Remiremont. But that kind of religion is doomed and will not survive three generations of sound secular education given equally to both sexes. The craving for signs and wonders—that broad road which attracts so

¹ *Outspoken Essays*, pp. 168-9.

many converts and wins so rapid a success—leads religion at last to its destruction, as Christ seems to have warned His own disciples. Science has been the slowly advancing Nemesis which has overtaken a barbarised and paganised Christianity. She has come with a winnowing fan in her hand, and she will not stop till she has thoroughly purged her floor. She has left us the divine Christ, whatever may be the truth about certain mysterious events in His human life.”

The argument (c) from the historical nature of Christianity is again interesting because it contains an element of truth. In a recent examination of the psychology of the soldier the Rev. Kenneth Kirk has pointed out that the essential interest of the great mass of simple folk is in “persons.” Link up any abstract idea you please to a person, and you will win their sympathy and attention. Their philosophy is sound because it recognises the supreme worth of personality. Beyond all doubt the strongest asset of Christianity has been its presentation of the personal Christ. We have however in this book been faced with the fact that this personification of divine ideas lies so far in the past that it seems to have very little in common with the circumstances of a population which knows nothing or next to nothing about the Graeco-Roman world and very little about its own national history, while its acquaintance with the national literature of the Hebrews is probably scantier. It is likely that in the main Dr. Figgis is right. The Christ of the Gospels wins His way to universal acceptance

primarily by His own intrinsic merit. He is *Himself*, and therewith infinite in His appeal. The simple elemental conditions of His career are quite within the range of untrained minds to appreciate. Artificial and complex as our civilisation may seem, we are not as far from Nazareth and the hills of Galilee as we think.¹

On the subject of forgiveness it is harder to speak than on any other. The discarding of the *literal* truth of the early chapters of Genesis, and the supposed upward procession of mankind, together with the humanising of our notions of punishment, have all tended to weaken our sense of human failure, and it is perfectly true that the distinction between sick and healthy-minded souls is no artificial one, and that sickness and morbidity of soul are not infrequently due to disease or fatigue rather than to moral obliquity. And yet it must in fairness be admitted that recent history has somewhat discredited that section of mankind which lightly regarded conviction of sin and sense of failure. How many souls are there upon whom sickness has not laid its hand? As few, it may be supposed, as there are living bodies which remain wholly untouched up to the time of their dissolution by the effects of disease, actual or inherited.

III

It is urged that Christianity has achieved more beneficial results and has done more to

¹ See p. 109, to which we are here brought back.

make the earth a better planet, than any other religion.

A short enquiry conducted under this heading was published by Mr. Mozley in 1917, and we have already quoted from it in another connection. Mr. Mozley deals first with the religious achievement of Christianity. On this topic he concludes that the greatest religious achievement of Christianity is itself. The aim of most people is and has ever been to gain happiness, either for themselves or for as many others as possible, and it is pointed out by Professor Sidgwick that those who aim very hard at happiness direct, usually fail. Christianity firmly maintains that the way to happiness lies through securing spiritual truth, and that this truth when reached makes a man free to be happy under any conditions however desperate. The reason why Christianity captured the Graeco-Roman world was because the average man of the Roman Empire had realised this law of life, and had been hunting through the various cults, Isis, Serapis, Mithra and the like, and found their ingredient of spiritual truth a pretty poor one. Their gods were mythical, and expressed no loving interest in the human race, and there was no moral dynamic about them whereby the world could be made better. But Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the divine Kurios of Kurioi, who for us men and for our salvation came and suffered within the bounds of history under Pontius Pilate, and He *did* make people better. The world to-day is still seeking happiness by the direct method and in spite of the European war does not yet seem

to have reached to any great extent the stage of disillusionment. A good many individuals, however, have reached that stage and have begun the inspection of the various fancy-cults which offer them relief and release. I know that it is usually said that institutional Christianity is too much wrapped up in irrelevancies for people to appreciate it.

While there is some truth in this, the real reasons it seems to me why men to-day do not acclaim it as they should are (1) the stigma of its remoteness, to the removal of which many pages of this book are devoted. (2) The indifference to truth, spiritual or otherwise, which I am afraid is characteristic of church and pagan folk alike to-day, and in respect of which we compare very unfavourably with the people of the first few centuries of our era. It is, no doubt, kinder not to anathematise those whose opinions differ from yours, but if one gives up doing it, it need not be because one is kind, but because one is too lazy to care whether anyone believes truth rather than falsehood. One can heartily agree with Mr. Mozley, therefore, when he says that Christianity made the world a better place by insisting on spiritual truth as a serious thing, and that it will only continue to do so when men, turning to God in disillusionment, seek the truth about Him rather than a short cut to present happiness. The same point is made by Mr. Glover¹ where he says that the old pagan religion stood for "the unexamined life," for tradition rather than reflection.

¹ *The Jesus of History*, p. 203.

There was no deep sense of truth. The Christian "outlived" the pagan, "outdied" him and "out-thought" him. Because he thought rightly about Christ he had a new courage in the face of death, and a new joy in daily life. "There is no place for an ignorant Christian. From the very start every Christian had to know and to understand, and he had to read the Gospels; he had to be able to give the reason for his faith. He was committed to a great propaganda, to the preaching of Jesus, and he had to preach with penetration and appeal."

Mr. Mozley next goes on to deal with the political and social influence of Christianity. Here he accredits it with having supplied the moral dynamic for all the improvements which can be included under that heading since it began its mission. There is, however, as he admits, another aspect which is often slurred over by controversialists on the Christian side, and which is made much of by the enemies of religion. A clear statement of their arguments was set forth in *The Challenge* (March 7th, 1919) by Mr. Clutton Brock in a contribution to some correspondence which appeared under the heading "The younger generation."

"It is assumed," he says, "by some modern apologists that the spiritual advance of Europe during the last eighteen hundred years has been caused by miraculous or dogmatic Christianity. But there are people more common on the Continent than in England, who assume the contrary. They take it for granted that the great obstacle to all human progress is what they call superstition,

by which they mean this same dogmatic Christianity. Their motto is—*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*—and they can make out a case for themselves. They say that Christianity mastered the ancient world in its decline and hastened that decline ; that it did not try to abolish slavery but increased religious persecution ; that it was hostile to freedom of thought, which certainly is one of the chief means of human progress, spiritual as well as material ; and that freedom of thought revived only when the Church was losing its supremacy, and was bitterly opposed by the Church as long as the Church had the power to oppose it.

“ If you say that the Church is not Christianity, they reply that you appeal to the actual achievements of Christianity and must take the bad with the good. You cannot at one moment take credit for what an actual Church has done and at the next say that all its misdeeds are irrelevant because it has fallen short of the ideal. In fact this practical test is a very dangerous one ; it is, whatever Canon Burroughs may say, pragmatic, and must be applied pragmatically. He appeals to ‘ the fact of experience,’ and everyone will agree with him that dogmatic Christianity has been a fact of great power. But whether for good or evil, that is passionately disputed.

“ I suppose we are nearly all agreed that there has been a spiritual advance in the last eighteen hundred years, but we are not agreed that it has been caused by the element of dogma in Christianity, at least by that which the orthodox call dogma. If you are

going to judge that element by its results you must admit that it has often produced the most horrible cruelties. You may say that it ought not to have done so, but Canon Burroughs appeals to results, and these cruelties are among the actual results of actual dogmatic Christianity. For my part, I think the appeal to results will produce merely an endless and futile controversy. Both parties will continue to see the results as they choose to see them, and will, for the most part, remain unaware that others see them differently."

Mr. Mozley answers this kind of argument very carefully and in the main as it would seem conclusively.

It will on the whole be convenient to summarise his argument, which consists in stating four allegations and answering them each in turn.

Allegation 1. Christianity, when it had power, discouraged free enquiry.

Answer. No enquiry can be absolutely "free," in the sense that it starts with no presuppositions whatever. All enquiry is preceded by an act of faith in some first principles. Intellectual activity and hard thinking are a notable characteristic of the thirteenth century in Europe. The only restrictions of liberty were made in the interests of society and not of some abstract view of truth. It was impossible for anyone to envisage an interpretation of life which did not accept the Christian premises, since these were bed-rock realities which no freedom of enquiry seemed in the least likely to overthrow. It may be added that the fact that the

interpretation of Christianity current in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was an incomplete interpretation does not therefore disqualify it from holding the position it did at that time, *i.e.* as the basis of society. It may also be added that apart from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there are abundant instances of thinkers who were entirely unconscious of any check upon their freedom to speculate due to the fact that they were convinced adherents of the Christian standpoint. It is no doubt possible to point to certain official discouragements of speculation on the part of the authorities of the Latin Church, and to a less extent among Anglicans and Presbyterians. I think Mr. Mozley might have made a little more of this with advantage, since it is worth while admitting as Baron von Hügel does that the official authority in churches is seen at its worst in dealing with matters of this sort.¹

To admit this does no harm and is necessary to the interests of truth, while at the same time it is possible to point to a very real devotion to sound learning and intellectual sincerity which has contrived to maintain itself with the approval of some of the highest authorities within the Anglican Church, and which manifests itself in the words of the late Archbishop Temple, when certain ecclesiastics wished to put a ban upon biblical criticism, "If the conclusions are prescribed, the study is precluded."

Allegation 2. Christianity has been responsible for appalling cruelties in the matter of persecution.

¹ *The Papal Encyclical and the Pentateuch*, von Hügel and Briggs.

Answer. This charge has much truth in it, and many things undoubtedly belong to the past history of the entanglement of the Christian religion in earthly affairs, for which there is no possible excuse. The medieval state, holding as it did the Christian premises, naturally regarded intellectual deviation as perilous to social well-being, and heretics therefore as persons to be restrained either by imprisonment or execution. Mr. Mozley is if anything a trifle too gentle in this section. It is true he points out that the whole question of toleration is much more difficult than the assailants of the Christian record in this matter allow; but I think he might have made his point more strongly. What substitute for the Christian theory of life can we point to at the present day which has established itself with less bloodshed? As soon as any religious or social theory is adopted by any state as the basis for government it is certain to apply force to those who refuse to believe in it. It is not necessary for the theory adopted by the State to be false. On the contrary the greater the truth and the more urgent its application, the greater likelihood there is that there will be persecution. So long as religion is a matter of private belief, or so long as it is held in a variety of widely divergent forms, so that there is no one form strong enough or true enough to win universal acceptance, so long will there be no question of persecution. Social theories in France and in Russia have been imposed upon the respective countries by means of violent persecution. The theory that under certain circumstances conscription

is allowable has led the state in this country to restrain the liberty of those citizens who would not accept the theory but preferred one of their own. This was on the whole a very mild form of persecution, but it was perfectly true to type. If the state in this country ever came to adopt the dogma, "The means of production ought to be the property of the community not of the individual," we should probably see the upholders of private ownership persecuted into submission. In Russia they are rapidly being exterminated, whether rightly or wrongly depends upon their behaviour and the view we take of state-socialism. After all a great deal of the criminal law of England depends on the conviction of the majority of its inhabitants that certain of the ethical precepts of the Christian religion are so necessary and beneficial that it is worth while making it uncomfortable for the people who transgress them; while much of the unpopularity of Christians in public life has been due less to their spiritual dogmas than to the fact that their beliefs involve certain ethical consequences which disturb the peace of those who desire to rob their neighbours or to indulge sensual passions and yet live respectably, and who are therefore unwilling to tolerate an inconvenient amount of practical Christianity.

Allegation 3. Organised Christianity has taken the side of the rich and powerful against the poor, thereby placing itself in direct opposition to the teaching and spirit of its Founder.

Answer. This is simply an allegation against organised Christianity, and not against the principles

which it very imperfectly expresses. It is a particular application of the general objection to the organisation of ethics and the conventionalisation of religion, *i.e.* that they degrade the standard and come to terms with the wickedness of the world. The actual facts are that the bed-rock principles of Christianity definitely champion the poor and the oppressed, while the Church in action has repeatedly had to submit herself to reforms which have aimed at keeping her true to type in this particular, while she has never lacked a due succession of Christian saints possessed of " permanently troubled consciences " where social righteousness is concerned.

Allegation 4. Christianity has never really set itself against war.

Answer. It cannot be doubted that anything like a powerful anti-war sentiment in Christianity has been absent from, at the latest, the third century of our era. Yet, deeply as we must regret the militarisation of Christianity which seems to have accompanied the so-called conversion of Constantine, and the age of blood and iron which set in with the opening years of the fifth century, it is curious to reflect that the winning side in many of the great wars and battles of the last nineteen hundred years was the side which protected the civilised experience and spiritual religion of the Mediterranean world, even if it did not wholly understand or appreciate what it was protecting. It is possible to accept almost the whole of the indictment against war and yet to remain convinced that war is always

a possibility, and may become a duty, for the Christian man and the Christian nation. The use of force, even if it be inferior to that of love, must sometimes be justifiable, unless we are prepared with Tolstoy to rule it out altogether as something no Christian can ever have anything to do with. The fairest statement of the position would seem to be, that force as a means of adjusting proper relations between units or groups of human beings belongs to the lower side of man's nature, from which by development of his spiritual faculties he is ultimately to be set free. Force in private, civic, and national affairs has been to a varying extent, and indeed in some cases almost entirely eliminated. In international affairs much more progress is needed. To say that the Christian religion has tolerated war is to overlook the steady permeation of society by the Spirit of Christ which has culminated in the general feeling of repulsion with which most reasonable people entered upon the recent conflict, and also to overlook the very real service rendered by Christians in the mission field in bringing about the abolition of tribal and national wars. It is too much to hope that conventional Christians who have not sincerely faced the terms of their discipleship will ever be anything but a drag upon the progress of the spiritual life.

Mr. Mozley only refers in passing to the influence of Christianity upon slavery. He might have pointed out that New Testament Christianity so transmuted the relations of master and slave and so elevated the human personality of the slave himself

as to deal a death blow at slavery as an institution.¹ The modern recrudescence of slavery and of its veiled form "indentured" or "recruited" labour, is a pure and unblushing return to pagan methods by white men who have no pretence of caring one whit for Christianity, but simply for commercial gain. Such arguments as were used in the United States by Christians in the eighteenth century in favour of negro-slavery were based I think entirely on that uncritical use of the Old Testament from which we are still not wholly free, and which would, if persisted in, justify the revival of polygamy. I feel that there is a distinct point at issue between Mr. Brock and Mr. Mozley, where the former refers to miraculous or dogmatic Christianity, and the latter speaks of the repudiation of the supernatural. There is some looseness of expression here, and it is just such a looseness as causes the most tiresome misunderstanding of one party by another. When Mr. Mozley speaks of the repudiation of the supernatural, it would have been far better if he had said the repudiation of personalism. There is, as we have seen, but one order of reality, the natural, and the point at issue is whether it is controlled by a personal God, or by an impersonal force. Similarly Mr. Brock confuses us by saying that it is not agreed that such spiritual advance as has taken place is due to what the orthodox call dogma. Mr. Brock is much too able a man for it to be likely that he really thinks there is such a thing as undogmatic Christianity. Such a phenomenon is as impossible as a

¹ See Wells, *Outline*, p. 337.

literally invertebrate man, and it is just some of the biggest dogmas that have produced precisely the greatest alleged benefits, to wit those implied in the phrases, "God is love," "Thy brother for whom Christ died," "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," "Born of a woman," "Our Father," and many others like them.

The real weakness, however, of both Mr Brock's anti-clericals and of the orthodox whom they despise, is that they treat Christianity as though it were a finished product, with most of its life behind it. Now there is not the least reason for supposing this to be the case, and the real point at issue is not first, "How much good has Christianity done," but "How much truth is there in it"? In the course of its career it has had to run the risks of (a) being misunderstood, (b) having its essential truths confused with pre- or anti-Christian ones already existing in the minds of those who took it over, (c) worldly patronage, (d) being used as a tool by statesmen, (e) fashionable popularity, with the result that it is as easy to make a list of the good things which are due to Christian influence as it is to make another of all the bad ones. The two run more or less parallel and that is about all we can say. But if Christianity appears to be true and absolute, and if we are conscious that some of the best and truest things in it are more apparent now than they were to the contemporaries of our Lord, we shall not trouble ourselves much about the profit and loss account, because the real world-wide influence of our Lord, so far from being nearly complete, has

hardly yet begun, and the "end" is certainly not at all in the near future. To try to arrive at any final judgment as to the effects of Christianity is therefore premature.

At the moment this third claim is by way of being indignantly rejected by those who are deeply shocked at the apparent failure of Christianity to subdue the most barbarous instincts in human nature. This attitude has been carefully considered by Dr. Inge in his tenth essay,¹ and in a less academic form has been repeatedly discussed by army chaplains and their flocks. No lengthy disquisition upon it is here needed. One need only remark that (1) so long as the world is free it must have freedom to reject the Spirit of Christ, and the notion that Christ is going to subdue men's passions forcibly and against their inclination is doomed to disappointment and is not the Christian doctrine of God, (2) institutional religion almost invariably tends to compromise if not to betray the spirit of its founder. Fellowship is inevitable. It is part and parcel of human life. But it is a risk, and Christ ran this risk even when He gathered to Him the twelve. Add to this fact the singularly unsatisfactory methods by which a large part of Europe was in earlier centuries persuaded to adopt a veneer of Christianity, and it is hardly surprising to find those observers who are unaware of these historical happenings and are obsessed by the idea of progress,—to find them I say, disappointed with the results.

¹ Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, "The Indictment against Christianity."

Mr. Mozley's two final chapters deal with the achievements of Christianity in the arts and in the creation of character. He declares that no religion has rendered to art such services as Christianity has done. Not only is the attitude of Christ towards reality of the supremest influence in determining the choice of subjects by the artist, (so that the denial of His interpretation of reality severely restricts the genius of the artist,) but also the ethical standard of Christ purifies art and keeps it on a certain level. I think it must be admitted that not all art treating of Christian subjects is necessarily Christian in spirit. Many Madonnas are obviously pagan. Also, it is possible to appreciate artistic talent or cleverness, whether pre-Raphaelite or Futurist in the same way that one appreciates the military skill of Napoleon or the dramatic ability of a Caroline play-wright, without treating any of these manifestations as owing their substance and matter to obedience to Christ. Is cleverness then such as commands our admiration, whether in art, tactics, or the drama, the work of the Holy Spirit, or is it not? I do not think Mr. Mozley faces this question, and I must admit that I handle it myself with a good deal of hesitation. As far as I can see the gift of genius is the work of the Holy Spirit. Whether the use of the gift involves co-operation between the Divine and human spirits depends upon more than one factor. It depends upon the work or subject on which the individual is engaged, upon his aims and motives, and upon his opportunities of knowledge. In

some cases the matter is inspired, but the human element hinders the form of its expression. In others the power of expression is divinely inspired, but the artist chooses his subject from an unworthy source.

We need further to distinguish between art which is national, and the same art under Christian influence. Thus for instance gothic art differs from Moorish art, and the one is influenced by Christianity and the other by Islam, but it is by no means certain that if the religions had been reversed there would have been very much difference between Islamic gothic and Christian gothic, or between Islamic Moorish and Christian Moorish in broad outline. The outlines of gothic are essentially "gothic" and they are as much racially conditioned as are (in their own way) the outlines of Moorish. It is in the detail that the difference is so enormous. It is as impossible to conceive of a Mohammedan designing the chapter-house at Southwell as it is to conceive of a Christian executing the carvings of the Alhambra. The Christian religion, however, has no art of its own. If it had, that would be an argument against its Catholicity. The gothic churches in India are not marks of Christianity. They are signs of the presence of a conquering race and of a race that has been foolish enough to believe that Christ prefers to be worshipped in a gothic building. Yet the great church of the Oxford Mission at Barisal shows the Indian genius purified from its indecencies, and the Christian hospital at Ping-yin is completely Chinese in its outlines, while

the Chinese illustrations of the New Testament recently executed betray not the slightest trace of western influence. These are in the true line of development. Mr. Mozley remarks that the Greek temples were shrines for the god rather than homes for the god's worshippers. This is doubtless true, but I do not think that gothic churches are homes for worshippers because they are gothic, but because they are Christian. Many gothic churches are also far from being the homes of worshippers, while there are numerous churches in the Greek style which, although they appear alien to the genius of this country, are nevertheless the happy and beloved homes of countless faithful souls.

The gift of a new inspiration is the real achievement of Christianity in art, and it is true alike in architecture, painting, poetry and music.

With Mr. Mozley's final chapter we reach the zenith of his argument, and it is remarkable that it should occupy so little space in proportion to its importance. In point of fact, however, the subject does not need a long chapter. All there is to be said can be said in a few words, with overwhelming results. Next to the intuitive value of Christianity I would place the Christian character as the strongest evidence for its absoluteness, and it is with this character that his final chapter deals.

We link up here with the first allegation about the racial extent of the Christian appeal. The value of missions lies at any rate in one respect in the fact that they have proved that it is possible to manufacture a Christian saint in any tribe or

nation anywhere on the earth's surface. Now the character of the Christian saint is something *sui generis*, quite unlike anything else in the world and (amid the thousands of unsatisfactory converts), a careful enquiry will elicit the fact that there is always at least one to be found among the members of any mission settlement. The Christian saint, even allowing for national differences, is the same all the world over. You hear about his doing the same kind of things, and as you read about him you feel that although he may be an Eskimo, and you may think yourself a very unworthy Anglo-Saxon disciple of Christ, yet if you and he met you would understand one another. You would possess a kind of *lingua franca*. The truth is that the Christian saint is simply the reflection of Christ, and is not merely an ideal, but exists as a fact, the most extraordinary fact in the world. There is no church so corrupt but it has had the credit of training at least one saint, while in accordance with a rule of life which has been observed to operate in other connections, the perversion of the Christian character is the worst and most horrible thing under the sun.

The same thing cannot be held to apply either to Buddha or Mohammed. Estimate the Buddha's charms as highly as you please, there is no great achievement in reproducing him. One might as well try to reproduce Schopenhauer. One can hardly believe that a character which can only be reproduced fully in the ascetic state can possibly be superior to one which is equally capable of reproduction in married or single life according as

one is called. As to the reproduction of Mohammed. The thing might be done. But would it be worth doing? What is the value achieved in reproducing a character so chequered? Here is, as Carlyle says, "a great rude human soul," obsessed by the immeasurable sovereignty of God, ambitious to found a universal religion and to claim the homage and allegiance of mankind, and finding in the process that his ambitions harmonise very well with the aspirations of Arab nationalism. Here is an individual who lived partly by plundering caravans, and who cruelly massacred a number of Jewish tribes, who sues when he is weak, and attacks with merciless severity when he is strong, who sanctioned even if he did not instigate numerous assassinations, and who added a convenient "revelation" to the Koran (Sura xxxiii) in order to legalise his marriage with the divorced wife of his adopted son, of whom he had become enamoured while she was still his son's wife. It is hardly credible that those who advocate Mohammedanism as worthy of toleration can have looked very carefully into the circumstances of its origin. However true it be that Mohammed always spoke of himself as a sinner, there can be no comparison between the Christ who went on from strength to strength till He offered the sublime sacrifice of Calvary, and the Arab who began as the sincere preacher of a rigid monotheism and ended by "forging God's signature to cheques giving him permission to marry as many wives as he pleases." "It seems," says a worker among Mohammedans, "as if Mohammed at last came to

the belief that a man, once he is called to be a prophet, can do no wrong, and that any information he picks up, no matter how he picks it up, is due to revelation."

Summing up then, we may say that the first of the three claims stated at the beginning of this chapter is the strongest, and that Christianity certainly does seem far superior to any other universalist religion in its suitability for all peoples, nations, and languages.

The second claim is dangerous, because however Christianity may meet human needs, to stress that side of it is to desert the search for truth, since truth is not essentially geocentric. Those who have found happiness in Christianity have found it not by looking for happiness but by trying to see things as Christ saw them regardless of the consequences.

The third claim, though frequently made, usually produces the juxtaposition of slave-abolition and hospitals, as against religious wars and persecutions. It is, therefore, in most cases to be avoided unless it is supported with the kind of moderation which Mr. Mozley displays. We can give the most unqualified assent to the beneficial influence of Christianity in art, character, and spiritual truth, and we can see its influence shaping (under difficulties) in social matters. Politics, whether domestic or foreign, have still, we may take it, for the most part, yet to be baptized into Christianity.

CHAPTER V

RECENT EFFORTS TO RECONSTRUCT THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE WORLD

I PROPOSE in this section to give as complete an account as possible of the attempts made by Professor Ernst Troeltsch to solve the particular problem which lies before us. I do so at some considerable length because his is the most serious contribution which has been made to the subject. To avoid awkwardness I have written in *oratio recta*, but it must be borne in mind that the conclusions are those of Troeltsch, and not necessarily those of the author. I have in some cases adopted a paraphrase and in others a literal translation, my object being to give the argument as truthfully as I can in as convenient a compass as possible.

The abridgment which follows is made from the second edition of Troeltsch's *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*. It is a rare book in this country, and has so far not been published in English, and I am therefore deeply indebted to Baron Friedrich von Hügel for giving me access to his copy.

I

It may be taken for granted that since the eighteenth century there has arisen a type of culture, distinct from that of antiquity and the Catholic Church, one of whose chief characteristics is a relentlessly historical view of human affairs. It is based upon a fundamentally new principle, namely that the human horizon must be traced backwards into the past and sideways over the expanse of the present. The simple view which regards each type of civilization and each scheme of values as possessing intrinsic worth is replaced by a view which puts them side by side as merely relative historical objects. This would seem to spell the end of all dogmatism. In the old days history was an appendage of the reigning ideas of civilization. This is no longer the case, and the scientific historian is content to extract precise happenings from an analysis of original authorities.¹

This new outlook has had a special influence upon Christianity, which like all great spiritual movements, has been full of a naïve confidence in itself as a norm or standard of truth. Until recently this confidence gained strength from apologetics by their opposition of Christianity to all that was non-Christian. The apologetic of more recent times, however, as expressed by Schleiermacher and Hegel, took a different line and conceived of Christianity as the *realisation* of the religious ideal. Christianity

¹ A good illustration of this attitude towards history is to be found in the army order relating to education which lays down that "facts, not opinions," are to be taught.

was regarded by them in this way as *absolute* and Jesus as the point at which absolute religion burst through and appeared. The attribute "absolute" is of essential importance and is the keyword of modern evolutionist apologetic. In the latter there ceases to be an antithesis between the human and the divine, for all is human, all is equally divine. All religion is thus truth from God. But there must needs be a final stage of truth, the highest, proclaiming itself as such through the fulfilment of the law of development which lies embedded in the common conception of religion. This apologetic does not base itself upon miracle or conversion, but upon the progressive enrichment through each succeeding generation of the eternal conceptions of Christian thought, wherein the devout believer finds a strong sacred foundation for his inward and spiritual life. Such knowledge is not complete cognition of God—that God alone has. But it is the completest cognition that man can have. This is the real meaning of the word "absolute." It denotes the complete self-comprehension of the idea struggling to its full clarity, the self-realization of God in human consciousness. It is the speculative equivalent of the ecclesiastico-dogmatic supra-naturalism.

It must be clearly understood that this purely evolutionist attitude is not precisely that of Hegel and Schleiermacher, since for them there was in the life of Christ a kind of irruption or downrush of absolute religion. In this they display great affinity with the orthodox apologetic of their day,

such as may be found in the writings of Franck and Laberthonnière. The main difference between them is that in the former case the stress is laid upon an inward, in the latter upon an outward miracle. The orthodox view is that man is blinded and therefore needs the descent of a supernatural divine power, and the Christian position may be strengthened either by nature miracles or the psychological miracles of conversion. The thorough-going evolutionist does not regard Hegel's use of the word "absolute" as truly scientific. To him the realization of the conception of religion at a sudden point in the past by a modern miracle is as much exclusive supra-naturalism as Catholic orthodoxy.

The contempt of many modern theologians for these two great conceptions (*i.e.* the Hegelian and the Orthodox) is very superficial and ill-considered.

As often as they have been buried, so often have their grave-diggers themselves begun to make use of their despised formularies, without however retaining their old meaning.

The result of this is that the phrase, "the absoluteness of Christianity," is to-day used by many with very little regard for its original meaning, and many of its uses contradict one another. Thus there are some who use it to designate the supernatural revelation without the exact basis of this revelation, making it, in fact, one of the many loose-fitting scientific masks which are worn over the armour of theology. To others the phrase means the character

of Christianity as the final and perfect religion, without altogether banishing anxiety and without depriving such a religion of the possibility of development. To others again the phrase means the absolute claim of Christianity to be the only truth, a claim which must be accepted without a murmur, however much it may conflict with other apparent truths. It can only be said in this connection that mere relative valuation is not in the very least equivalent to conceding exclusive supernatural claims, nor is either of these the same as the view of Christianity as the absolute completion of the concept of religion.

The old Christianity had to fight its way to an absolute supremacy. The first to receive it as a new independent and universal religious force was St. Paul, but he was concerned chiefly (1) with Judaism, both palestinian and hellenistic, whose apologetic he sets simply against heathenism, (2) with his entirely personal experiences of the risen Christ.

Gnosticism really first raised the question as one of principle, and in debate with it ecclesiastical Christianity took up its final position. It clothed itself in its first and strongest coat of mail, that of a supernatural divine revelation and incarnation. This, for the unlettered multitude. But beside it there stood the ecclesiastical philosophy that all elements of truth, wherever found in foreign cults, mythologies, etc., were an outflow of the Divine Reason (Logos, Word) into the natural world, and that these instances were gathered together and

summed up in Christ who is the absolute unfolding of the Divine Reason. This philosophy, in spite of its rationalism is really based upon the theory of a supra-natural divine revelation. It must be borne in mind that strictly speaking primitive Christianity regarded itself as Revelation and not Religion, and the ancient world was quite ready to acquiesce in the absorption of the latter in its many examples into the former. For the evolutionist apologetic this has little interest and not much more for the conservative. We are left then with two theories, (1) the supra-natural, which can never depend for evidence purely upon inward experience, but demands the acceptance on authority of certain historical events, (2) non-miraculous Christianity,¹ which was the goal of the best intellects at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and while it only bridged the gulf to a certain extent, still maintains itself in non-ecclesiastical quarters. The question here to be considered is :—Does this second theory replace the first so as to be tenable in view of the absolute claim of Christianity ?

¹ Troeltsch is thinking here of those who weeded the miraculous out of the Gospel story as myth. Theologians such as Dr. Bethune-Baker hardly come under this category, since they are too wise to cut passages out of the text merely because they are hard to understand, and only follow our Lord's commands in declining to use them as evidential. Troeltsch's classification is therefore a little unhappy if we are to apply it to the most recent of our modernists. The Dean of St. Paul's, while he asserts "it can never again be possible to make the truths of religion depend on physical portents having taken place as recorded," qualifies the remark by saying in the same breath: "It is not likely, perhaps, that the progress of science will increase the difficulty of believing them [to have taken place]."

II

Harnack's answer to this question is in the affirmative. He regards the Gospel as Religion, saying, "One concerns oneself with Religion when one concerns oneself with Christianity." To him Christianity stands at the end of the line of development and as the actual realization of a concept. It may be maintained, however, that history as history admits of no such a generalization but merely exhibits concrete instances. It is open to debate whether Christianity can be established as Absolute Religion on the historical method and with historical data. The feeling that this cannot be done is the real cause of much of the uncertainty and shadowiness of present-day theology.

It is impossible in view of the knowledge obtained by the science of religion so to formulate the general conception of religion as to make it embrace at one and the same time the whole of a standard and the particular details involved in the development of that standard. It is equally impossible to realise the general conception in the course of historical development. The idea not only does not gain its full expression in one single example but it can hardly, even supposing that were true, express itself fully in an example which comes as a middle term in the series. How can the general conception be fully expressed when its most typical realization lies perchance in the unreckonable future? The construction of absolute religion on this hypothesis

cannot depend upon the mere acceptance of a group of historical events, but would seem to involve a forecast,—the construction of the religion of the future. The impossibility of such a forecast would seem to be the lesson to be drawn from the desultory nature of all attempts hitherto made to achieve it. Every devout man admits Christianity to be a religious force of the highest significance, and a magnificent religious verity. Yet the Christianity of every age and especially of that of its origin seems to be a separate historical phenomenon.

Never, say some keen observers, is Christianity the absolute religion free from the historical conditions of the moment, never is it the immutable unconditioned realization of a general concept of religion. If we try to seek out the ruling idea, this idea is at every moment interwoven with perfectly definite historical conditions. It lives in them, and it is falsified by them if it is treated as an absolute idea. To meet these critics the theologian applies his skill, seeking to dis sever the husk from the kernel. Yet in spite of all his endeavours it seems as though to make the kernel absolute is to make the husk absolute, to make the husk relative is to render the kernel relative as well. The great central notions of Christianity are closely bound up with the ideas current in the age of its origin, which are wholly strange to us. Every construction of Christianity on the basis of an absolute conception fulfilling itself, shatters upon the rocks of historical reality. Once we identify it with the Absolute in religion, we can neither discover truly

its rise and progress nor its significance in the evolution of religion.

Similar misgivings surround the idea of *development*. In comparative religion this term is chiefly used of the elementary cults of uncivilized man, where the lack of definite evidence and the twilight of uncertainty give free play for speculative theories. The great religions of civilized men are, on the contrary, too well known to allow of this; *e.g.* It has been found unworkable to treat Primitive Christianity, Catholicism, and Protestantism as steps in a logical chain of development. The fathers of the theology of development have only been able to maintain their position, because the religio-historical data of their day were scanty and confined, and because they were not rigidly scientific.

It must be admitted that both Hegel and Schleiermacher use the conception of Absoluteness with prudence. Schleiermacher limited it to the Person of Jesus, while Hegel constructed a theory of the Absolute and linked it on to historical Christianity. But their massive treatment of the subject has not prevented the more sharp-witted of their followers¹ from seeing that it either leads back to the old supernaturalism, or else excludes *all* absoluteness from history.

Strauss declares Schleiermacher's Absolute Jesus to be a bloodless reconstruction. History, he says, is no place for absolute religions and absolute personalities. Both phrases carry in themselves

¹ Cf. Bauer, Renan, Strauss, Lagarde.

contradictions. Lagarde's verdict is somewhat different. Strauss had no deep religious feelings, but Lagarde, though not an acute dialectician, was a profoundly religious man. He separated the notion of development in religion from all dogmatic and metaphysical valuations, and initiated a study of Christianity on comparative lines, undertaken with every aid possible, for the purpose of arriving at its true historical value. Instances of the influence of this new method of enquiry are to be found in such works as Weizsäcker's *Apostolic Age* and Jülicher's *Parables*, and still further in the more recent attempts to expound the rise of Christianity under the influence of classical and semitic associations, and to invoke the aid of philology.¹ There is in these investigations some display of the prejudice of intellectual aristocrats against Christianity. But it is clear gain at any rate for the enquiry to be undertaken, as to whether Christianity is one single idea, or a highly complicated combination of perfectly distinct contemporaneous ideas.

Yet another method of approach is that of Ritschl. To him Christianity is the highest conceivable religion which can satisfy spiritual and moral postulates, and at the same time fulfil the promise of some better thing to come, which is to be found in "natural religion." Scientific psychology demands a religion of a certain sort, and Christianity is such. The justice of the claim of Jesus is His congruity with

¹ Compare the writings of Reitzenstein, and (quite recently) Professor Kirsopp Lake's *Prolegomena to the Acts of the Apostles* and his monograph *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*.

the ethical postulates of the natural consciousness.¹ It may be objected that this theory leads us back again to the absolute supra-natural revelation, and that it maintains the attribute of absoluteness without its form, *i.e.* without the miraculous causation which is its distinguishing mark. It may also be objected that the ethical postulates are historical data which, though they stand in close relation to Christianity, remain over when the relentless sceptic has taken away their dogmatic accompaniment.²

III

So far the enquiry seems to lead to negative results. There is almost a disposition to say: "Christianity in all the periods of its history is a purely historical phenomenon, with all the accompaniments of an individual historical phenomenon, just like other great religions." The consequence of historical thought tends to be an unbounded relativism, which regards history as the parent of an interminable variety of particular instances, all of them fleeting and transitory. Three things are responsible for this:—(1) Over-specialization which

¹ See in this connection the main ideas of Mr. Shebbeare's *Religion in an Age of Doubt*, and the discussion of "Values" in Mr. Clutton Brock's *Studies in Christianity*.

² Few will agree with this objection. People may live on their moral reserves after they have lost their faith, but we see more and more plainly in these days that the ethical postulates do not long survive the surrender of the belief in certain historical events which brought those postulates to the surface, and awakened a response in the human consciousness. See the Bishop of Zanzibar on this matter in *The Christ and His Critics*.

breaks up history from a great wave into an infinite number of small ripples. (2) The naturalistic convention which insists on defining everything in terms of its antecedents. (3) The artistic canon of judging everything by itself, wherein the critic not merely lets his sun shine on the righteous and unrighteous, but almost ceases to recognize any distinction between them at all. For weak natures history is identical with the craving for strange characters and contempt for one's own, with scepticism and frivolity or with blasé agnosticism.

This however is emphatically not true of the best and worthiest exponents of historical science. In the first place the study of detail is a means and not an end in itself. It is given to few to be really historians. The idea that every little person with a seminar education is a historian is a disease of modern thought. Much of what calls itself history at present is not history but the work of dilettanti, or else not so much history as clay for the bricks of history. In the second place, causation theories do not involve the denial of all new creations. To apply to history the scientific method which is for ever seeking universal laws is to lose sight of the essence of history. That essence is the rise of the Individual and Particular within the working of the forces given to every age, and this is not so much a derivation as a new creation out of the transcendental depths of history. Such a new creature may be a complex, but yet it is a distinct and particular complex, and is all the more significant in proportion as it has brought enduring ethical

forces to the control of natural conditions. There can therefore be in history no talk of endless successions of single forces organizing and disorganizing themselves.¹ On the contrary, beside the natural processes we see the ideals of life constructing themselves in the depths of the soul, and these are not mere products so much as creative controllers of the web of history, and base their claims to possess value not on the causal necessity of their arising, but upon their *truth*. We are in this matter too much under the influence of naturalist scholasticism, which is just as much a scholasticism under the guise of Hegelian dialectic as under the guise of Christianized Aristotelianism.

Out of history itself and out of theories of perception are we to construct the meaning of history and not out of the natural sciences. These testify that each human being is a microcosm. It is only weakness or collapse of moral strength, and a despair of the hope of finding a unified goal for events that leads to relativism. The Renans of the theological world are bankrupt before they begin.

It is plain that just those notions which have made the word "relative" so repulsive, turn out to be in no way necessary parts of it. Relativity only denotes that all historical phenomena are special individual formations in the construction of a more or less contingent active general environment, so that in no moment of history can the value of a

¹ See also some striking passages in Troeltsch, *Christentum und Religionsgeschichte*, *Collected Works*, p. 362.

particular individual be completely free from the particularities of the momentary situation.

Absolute unchangeable value lies not in history but in the *future* of history. History does not exclude the norm, but its essential function is to fight for the consummation of the norm. Not an antithesis of relativism and absolutism but the combination of both, the steady pursuit of an absolute goal in and through the relative,—this is the task of history. The question which is its main concern, and which can be destroyed neither through the naturalization of history nor through the scepticism of specialists, is the question of continually constructing new syntheses in which the Absolute not only bears the form possible for it at the moment, but manifests in spite of it the great truth, *i.e.* that such a form approximates as nearly as possible to the true final value which will be of general application. To bring in the consideration of values in this way, is, it is true, to overstep the bounds of history in the narrow sense of that word. But this cannot be helped. A bird's-eye view is imperative. Although the fragmentary state of our knowledge and the impossibility of construing history according to law render a complete survey impossible, it behoves us to make the best use of what we have. We can reckon the existence of human beings upon the earth as extending approximately over a few hundred thousand years, and of these we know only the last six or seven thousand. We do not know how long human beings will continue to live on

this planet, but we can reckon with similar periods. Therewith comes in the consideration that with the normal variation of the poles is bound to come a variation of climate which will inflict an ice-age upon countries which are now warm, and so completely dislocate the bases of civilization. It is not out of the question that our civilization had fore-runners, and that its tradition, like theirs, might break off short. Yet we need not concern ourselves with the past or future which are beyond our ken. We must confine ourselves to the civilization we know; and this justifies us as we study it, in the assumption that every past or future scheme of civilization has moved or will move in similar stages. At any rate we can only analyse within our own world-horizon and what we know of its history.

In this analysis we are inevitably led to compare the great types of spiritual life, and when we come to do this it is remarkable how such a comparison produces a further shrinkage of relativism. The history of religion does not by any means provide us with a boundless mass of conflicting values. Quite the contrary. On investigation it shows remarkably few of such values and very seldom discloses any spiritual goals which are actually new. Variety almost confines itself to the lower stages of religion and is chiefly a variety of outward expression and ceremonial, slightly ruffling the surface of a great sea of monotony. The great creative powers of the inner life only begin to emerge in the higher stages, and the irruptions of such powers are not at

all numerous. The seers who have had something new to tell humanity are rare, and it is astonishing on what a limited number of truths humanity has lived. In the study of comparative religion we are not faced with a wealth of religious forces about which we can never come to any decision, but only with a few great creations. The manifold religions of uncivilized peoples and their polytheisms have no significance in the quest after the highest religious values. There are but few great ethical and spiritual religions which build up a higher world in contradiction to the mere world of body and mind. In this connection we only need to consider :—

Judaism	}
Christianity	
Islam	
Brahminism and Buddhism	
Monistic Pantheism	}
Dualistic Mysticism	
Moral Theism.	

The last three are great philosophic attempts to construct a rational religion, but such "rational" religions are always offshoots from the positive historical religions and are never possessed of any strong independent religious impulse. Productive power lies only in the historical religions. The others exhibit no vigour and inspire little fellowship. Graeco-Roman religious philosophy attaches itself to Christianity. Indian speculation attaches itself either to Brahminism or Buddhism. All modern attempts to construct a modern philosophic religion move in one or other of these areas and betray no

new idea or power. The antithesis is in fact one between Prophetic-Christian-Platonic-Stoic religion on the one hand and Buddhistic-Oriental religion on the other.

It does not follow that the recognition of the relative in history involves the conclusion that these great manifestations are all temporal and doomed to disappear. We find no difficulty in regarding the great acquisitions of science, state craft, art, social and religious life as permanent. Endless progress or rather endless differentiation is a conclusion without warrant,¹ and only probable to those who have rejected as illusions all metaphysical conceptions of the transcendental background of history, and any religious faith in the unity and reasonableness of reality. Historical thought lends itself in no wise to this nihilism. On the contrary there seems little reason to suppose that the future will show an immeasurable welter of religious productivity. It is much more likely that there will be development on the plateau we have already reached, and a conflict between already existing forces as long as our civilization continues. Then will come the victory of the highest value, and the comprehension within it of all reality.²

Man's biological position has got on to a firm footing. Eventually his religious position in its

¹ Cf. Inge, *The Christian Doctrine of the future life* (Church Congress, 1919). "The belief in perpetual progress as a law of nature is a superstition: it has no basis in history or science or religion."

² Cf. in this connection I Cor. 15²⁴⁻²⁸, Rev. 21, esp. ²⁶; Daniel 7¹⁴.

main principles will reach a similar footing and no unprecedented religious super-man will disturb it.

This way of treating the historical view-point does not exclude the idea that the great values and contents of the spiritual life can be compared with one another, judged by a standard of value, and subordinated to a common end. This end or aim may present itself in various periods in different forms, and these various subordinate aims illustrate the final fundamental aim. Historical thought would not be possible if something of the ideal did not express itself in every generation of the actual.

It remains to ask, "What is the standard?" In the middle ages it was the self-conscious idea, prevailing in its own circle of civilization and appearing to be immediately divine. In the age of the *Aufklärung* it lay in the spontaneous reasoning which, independently of time and history, led to the same result in the case of every individual. But these are both past modes of reckoning. To us, who feel the continuous stream of living existence as of prime importance, the standard manifests itself as that which runs through the whole, and which may be seen exhibiting itself in different forms in the historical discontinuities, or events which break the chain, and of which those who survey the life-movement from outside as well as in, obtain both an intimate and a bird's-eye view.

This definition obviously gives special value to the historical manifestations of religion.

Nevertheless, scientific fairness seems to compel us to admit that while each manifestation is in

itself complete, and in so far has immediate access to the Divine, it is also a stage, and only a stage; in the journey to finality.

The goal always seems ahead.¹ Scientific fairness, however, if we are thinking of natural science will mislead us here; since the survey we have just been making is quite capable of being interpreted as teaching that we must not seek the ultimate conception of religion either in a rationally constructed faith, or in a syncretism which reduces all historical faith to a common denominator, but in a judicial weighing-up of the positive historical religious forces and revelations.

Just as in civilization great new developments are rare, and it is simply the individual nuances which increase with the working out of the great fundamental schemes, while the creative activity of the individual diminishes, so is it to a much larger degree in the sphere of religion.

With the progress of history the creative religious forces in the individual become scantier. He is possessed by ideas which deepen and intensify, and his activity becomes concentrated more and more on appropriating these great ideas, to which his piety can only add nuances of emphasis and thought. The present religious limpness and weakness, the yearning for deliverance and greater freedom on the part of all the higher religions is only a reaction due to the demands which those religions make, and a clear proof that the individual can here produce nothing new. Similarly with the steady differentiation

¹ *vorschwebenden.*

of religious life in the community, energetic and sometimes one-sided personalities uprear themselves as signs of the power latent in the community, and from these streams out the ever-expanding life of the great religious revivals and renewals.

The modern relativists and individualists frankly overlook these facts. They think the time has come (after the exposure of what they consider to be the great religious frauds of the past) for a new religion of books and pamphlets, wherein each can appeal to the facts in all their relativism, and spend his piety in investigating them further.¹

But these persons have not understood the teaching of history; for this shows us that it is precisely the more highly developed religions which remain fast-chained to the positive and historical, and that they progress not by annulling the latter but by developing it. A "new religion," built only upon the depths of simplicity, and yet capable of moving in harmony with the higher ideals of the world at large will most certainly never be produced either by our civilization or our science.

We remain dependent upon the great religious forces yet available to hand, and it is our duty to defend them against scepticism and anarchy as well as against naturalistic atheism, both of which are diseases of civilization. On the other hand, it is also our duty to set them in their appropriate intellectual environment, so that they can perform

¹ Troeltsch is presumably thinking of the spirit manifested in the writings of Sir James Frazer, and the sermons of such modern Lutheran divines as Wesenmayer.

the new social and ethical tasks which lie before them.

It must be admitted that this philosophy of history is not the product of an exact science such as mathematics or physics. Let us, however, remember that we are dealing with a sphere of reality in which exact measurements are impossible.

IV

The position we have reached then may be summarized as follows. The method of historical science *does not exclude* the possible recognition of Christianity as the highest religious truth with which we can be concerned, and upon which a system of values can be organized. But this is again negative, and simply amounts to a *nihil obstat*.

The real problem still remains. The argument in the middle of the last section, left us with two opposing groups of religious ideas. Can we say that the study of historical science positively indicates to-day that the Christian group is the superior, that it embodies the highest concepts of religion with which we can be concerned, and that it will ultimately triumph?

The answer to this question is a matter of personal conviction, which, although it proceeds partly from a judicial survey and bird's-eye view of all religions, is also partly due to the working out of its value from the inside, and is therefore in fact *a Creed*, and as such open to the mockery of those who

are only willing to recognize truths which can be demonstrated in a mathematical manner, or who regard every transgression of the grounds of research immediately in front of them as resulting in shadowy phantasy or self-seeking illusion. But yet, without the opposition and mockery of the children of this world, there can be no such thing as religious conviction and certainty, but only religious superficialities. These persons have not the monopoly of scientific thought, and their thought is only a part of reality, while their assurance displays greater self-satisfaction than it is entitled to do. A Creed such as that just referred to is not only compatible with scientific thought, but is the only sure guide to decisive action.¹

If we examine the great religions which make a bid for universality, we find Judaism and Islam stamped at once as inferior on account of their legalism.² On their redemptive side, Brahminism and Buddhism approach Christianity, but the Brahmin Deity is a cold abstraction, and the Buddhist Deity mere blind chance, into line with which the soul comes, through breaking its will and nullifying its thought, and so is saved by being absorbed into its own nothingness.

In all religions we find the conceptions, God, the Soul, this World, and a Higher World. In all salvation is concerned. But the non-Christian

¹ Cf. Bishop Butler's argument that probability is the guide of life.

² Troeltsch does not add, as we might have expected, the further obvious marks of inferiority, *i.e.* that the one is a back-water and the other a compromise.

religions do not satisfactorily achieve it. The legalistic religions prescribe the divine will, but leave the natural man to overcome the world by himself. The non-Christian redemption-cults absorb the world and man into the image and substance of God. Christianity alone has revealed a living Godhead which, while it is in act and will opposed to all mere appearances, and challenges the soul to sever itself from the world and unite itself with the Divine, nevertheless sends the soul back again into the world, purified from sin and care, to work in the world for the building up of a kingdom based upon the infinite value of personality.

Christianity stands among the great faiths as the strongest and most concentrated revelation of personal religion. Nay more, it has taken up an entirely unique position in that it alone has completed in practice the breach (everywhere admitted in theory) between the lower and the higher world, and has transfigured the material reality by bidding it uplift itself into this higher world, rising above immediate sensual necessity, and making it capable of doing this by the redemptive union of the soul (although stricken with sin and world-taint) with the love of God. *It is the only complete breach with the nature-religions which presents the higher world as one where the individual personal life is of everlasting value.* It renounces the world but only in so far as the superficial natural sense depends on it, and in so far as it is a power for evil. It affirms the world, in so far as it is of God and is received by the faithful as proceeding from and

moving towards God ; and in both renunciation and affirmation the true higher world is given a power and independence such as it has never before experienced. Between redemption through super-existence or non-existence achieved by thought, and redemption through faithful trust in the Personality of God as the Ground of all living and abiding worth—between these the choice has to be made. It is a choice of the religious consciousness, not a decision to be arrived at by scientific reasoning. There can be no hesitation in saying that the deepest sentiments and the highest aspirations of human life find themselves on the side of Personalistic Religion.

Christianity must also be regarded not merely as the climax but also as the point of convergence of all recognizable developed tendencies in religion ; it is central in relation to the remainder, and opens up a fundamentally new way of living. That this is not the same as the realization of a general abstract concept of religion, need not be denied. But it is precisely on account of its special features, which give a new and decisive clearness to the aim of religion, that Christianity is the climax. Yet we must not forget that it is also a historical phenomenon, and therefore while it reveals the religious life in its highest, simplest, and strongest form, it also exhibits just those temporary and individual limitations which beset everything historical.

It is on account of the foregoing that the finality of Christianity as an unsurpassable ¹ climax can be

¹ unüberbietbar.

only maintained with caution. There *might* be a higher revelation ; for although man has found the fulfilment of his highest hopes in Christianity, it has itself revealed the existence within him of other unexpected longings and desires, and it is not out of the question that some new revelation might discover others of a still higher quality. From the facts as they stand a completely convincing proof cannot be deduced. We can only say that as far as can be seen every religious force of the highest order depends on the Christian religion for its final sanction. Beyond this point, proofs come to an end, and we have left only that personal conviction, that sure confidence which no individual can analyse, however deeply he may feel it, that a new higher religion is utterly improbable.

Although Christianity succeeded other religions as a fundamentally new step forward, yet all the widening and deepening of spiritual life which has taken place since has been achieved on the basis of Christianity, and has brought with it nothing fundamentally new.

The essential conception of the Absolute is as something lying beyond history. Present Christianity we cannot and dare not, therefore, regard as absolute changeless truth in its final form. Its very simplest teaching is that the individual is admitted into the Fellowship of the Divine Spirit, in order that he may be guided into truth and receive knowledge of things that are to come and so face the future with courage and firm creative fearlessness. But the life of Christ is of absolute

value, because faith regards it as the central, permanent and decisive uplifting of the religious level, the setting up of a broad plateau on which man can dwell if he will, though on it he can, if he will, rove far afield.

V

The personalistic redemption-religion of Christianity, founded upon the prophets and Jesus, possessing its classic and chief literary expression in the Scriptures, and unfolding itself in an immeasurable richness as it unites itself with the Graeco-Roman and Teutonic civilizations,—*this*, then, is the highest and most logically unfolded scheme of religion which we know. Whatever in it is true life will remain life in every conceivable further development, and be included in such a development, and not brought to nought. If we conceive a possible break-up and overthrow of material and spiritual civilization, we are also bound to say that in our judgment any new civilization would be compelled to develop on similar lines.

That is our position, and only in this sense can the Absoluteness of Christianity be maintained. It is a combination of present absolute decision and historico-relative constructional development.

This leads us to the further question—Can such a conception of Absoluteness satisfy the devout person who seeks God and confesses belief in God? Such a question will not concern anyone who has

not felt the pressure of the problems which have led us to the foregoing enquiry and definition. But it is indeed worth asking the question whether the definition we have arrived at can satisfy the clergyman and the religious teacher of to-day, and give them a sure foundation for their work. Freedom from doubt and a deep sense of security are essential to them if they are to work joyously and with all their might and main.

They do not need to be able to preach apologetics from the pulpit, but they need a background of strong and convincing apologetic if their sermons are to possess freedom and fearlessness. The only thing that can make an impression upon their hearers will be the power of simple and sincere personal conviction. Can they, in view of the foregoing arguments, reasonably attain to this?

It would seem that even this question can confidently be met.

It is essential for the devout person to have truth, to find God truly, and to have his demands satisfied for a trustworthy revelation and unveiling of God. But is this the same as needing an *absolute* religion? Must the words "absolute" and "unsurpassable" be used in their sternest sense, allowing no room for development of doctrine?

We have seen that probability is our real guide, and that following in her wake we are led on from the language of science to that of devotion.

Only a fanatic for the cause of science could wish it to be otherwise. The devout person needs, it is true, the feeling of certainty that he is in the

right way, following the right star. He will not deny the existence of other ways, but for him it is enough that he follow the best and deepest that there is. He is a Christian because he finds in that Way the strongest and simplest revelation of the higher world, and he will recognize in the Christian Faith not the absolute but the normative religion. If he begins after this fashion he will soon go on to find that he has to do with the normative religion, not merely for the present but also for the future. But he will not make his Christianity depend on such theories.

He will build it upon his experience that he can never find good so much as in the prophetic-Christian realm of life, that in this realm he has really found God, and that no subsequent dealings of the Divine with humanity ever give the lie to this discovery. He sees the present linked with Jesus, who is the Source and Presentation in visible form of all this realm of ideas, and without whose central position in our faith no community of progressive believers is possible. He sees the future in all its conceivable forms also linked with Jesus. This is, however, a belief following upon experience; it is not a dogmatic theory the value of which has to be decided at the outset.

The devout person desires the Absolute, that is he desires God, for in God only can he find the Absolute. In history he has only partial access to it. To wish to have the Absolute in history in an absolute form at one single point is a piece of foolishness which staggers not only by its

impracticability, but also by the inner contradiction it gives to the essence of all historical religion. Whoever has adopted this as his theory of religion has inflicted upon it such a barrenness as can only develop into a hard fanaticism.

The Christian, therefore, only needs for his contentment the consciousness of such a revelation as has been described. The absolute religion he will leave in perfect peace to the future of events.

It might seem that the course of events has in recent times removed that isolation of Christ which makes redemption centre upon His action. But Christian history must be strenuously defended against the danger of undervaluing it as mere antiquities, since it is on the contrary the vital source of all free religious activity in this distorted world.

Christianity remains *the* great Revelation of God to men, even if other religions also be revelations, and even if the abstract possibility of further revelations be set aside by no theory.

Christianity remains *the* Redemption, even if in every religion there be redemption, and even if redemption advance in history with every implanting of faith in God in weak and sinful hearts.

Christianity remains the work of Jesus. Even if we cannot compass in *scientific* thought the *impossibility* of a superseding of Jesus, yet the fact remains that we are all too weak to be able to discover a higher divine power in our hearts, much more to discover peace and quiet anywhere save in subjection of ourselves to Him and His Kingdom

The Church remains the unique community of faith and love.

The devout person loses nothing by a simple and genuinely historical view of Christianity, and it relieves him from many cares which otherwise would disturb him. He need feel no alarm if he find kindred elements to Christianity in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. He need not be startled to discover that various causes have contributed to the rise and development of Christianity, for they are all living religious movements in which God has dwelt. It is the characteristic function of Christianity to be the crystallization point of all that is true and best in the inner life of man.¹

VI

It remains to consider the relation of this new view of Christianity to the old-established ecclesiastical view. Is any reconciliation possible?

The answer to this leads us to the final question, "How far is Christianity to be distinguished or separated from its ecclesiastical and historical form?" This is a general question which concerns all sorts of spiritual values. Many of these have carefully to be distinguished from the naïve setting in which they stand. "Absoluteness" is a common postulate of naïve thought. Further reflection, however, turns the naïve into the scientific. Primitive thought regards the earth as central and absolute, with the sun and stars revolving around it.

¹ See Mezger's criticism of this, quoted in chap. vi.

Patient research, however, has revealed the true facts, and shown that whatever absolute end the earth may serve, it is a minor planet revolving around the sun, while the solar system itself revolves around something greater. The problem therefore stated above is really that of the relation of the naïve and scientific conceptions of the world, in its bearing upon religion. The relationship of course is one of transition and there is pain in the process, pain, however, which is more than counterbalanced by the freedom which ensues from the transition. All religions are born absolute, and some have thought that this naïve absoluteness must pass away, and that it is an illusion and a dream. This is a mistake. Naïve absoluteness is no more removed by science than sight is turned to blindness by a more comprehensive view. The view merely alters the perspective, and in the widened perspective of religion, scepticism and atheism have no part to play.

The natural absoluteness of a religion is nothing else than the simple exposition of its actuality and reality of value, and this is unfolded in a variety of ways, according to the road along which each religion undertakes to reveal the higher world. Thus the natural absoluteness of the smaller animistic and the greater polytheistic religions is a restricted absoluteness, bounded by nationality and geography. Universality to these is at the most a great veiled brooding Necessity, Anankē.

The first real claim to an unbounded absoluteness comes with the great ethical and mystical universalist

religions, which institute a cosmic scheme with a law for spiritual beings to obey. Universalist religions are prophet-religions. Their origin lies not in theophanies and oracles, but in the living self-assurance of the power of a truth that grips the heart. If we consider these in turn, we shall see that they are all of them in some way defective.

Brahminism in essence remains the religion of a theological school and a priestly caste.

Oriental pantheism is esoteric priestly wisdom.

Buddhism is an order of monks.

Neo-Platonism does not depend on the will and power of its deity, far from the world and unpredicated, but on the necessity and general validity of its thought.

The great Hellenistic religions, with their syncretism, are ecstatically constructed products of reflection and esoteric teaching.

Absoluteness is only real where the Godhead stands out in ethical opposition to nature. Such a position is first seen in Zoroastrianism. The prophetic religion of Zoroaster undoubtedly signifies a mighty break-through of religion into the realm of ethical universalism. But it fails for two reasons. In the first place, it does not merge all under-gods in its one Divinity, but permits dualism. Ahriman is opposed by Ormuzd. In the second place it is not purely ethical, but is partially ceremonial.

The Hebrew prophetic religion was more fundamental, when, after the exile, it displayed Jahwe no longer as capricious, but as a morally holy Being, ruling the whole world-system and dominating

the heathen gods, and when also it created an individual piety of the soul, maintaining its inward independent existence against the world. But it failed in its linking of these conceptions to the chosen people. It was Judaistic, not Catholic.

After another fashion the Universalism of Islam was just as narrow. It inherited its strongest elements from Judaism, and did not create them. From Judaism came its monotheism, its ethical basis, and in part its absoluteness. Yet, while reverence for a sacred book was with Jews and Christians secondary, with Mohammed it was an essentially supreme concern.

Christianity is markedly distinguished from the foregoing. In the Gospel of Jesus, the Gospel of the Kingdom, we have at one and the same time perfect naïve absoluteness and also real scientific absoluteness. The one is the other. Christianity is the point of convergence of all the tendencies of religion, and it uplifts the aim of religion on to a fundamentally new level. Science is able to treat Christianity as absolute, though not in its primitive form, since it still believes in development, and holds the full truth as a thing of the future. It is true that scientifically the highest existing religion can only claim absoluteness so long as no trace of higher religious life shows itself. But the trend of the evidence, it will surely be admitted, goes far towards converting this claim into the creed of which we have already spoken. The Absolute in religion, however, is still in strict scientific parlance not an historical revelation or theophany, but God Himself.

It appears on investigation that the simple absoluteness of the faith and preaching of Jesus has not sufficed the Christian church.

Even the New Testament is full of attempts to strengthen its simple certainty with apologetic thoughts.¹ The modern world finds this apologetic unfruitful.

What then is to be done? There are three courses open. We can either maintain the development for sentimental reasons, or deny all claims of religion to be true, or yet again, adopt a middle course.

The solution would seem to lie in a distinction between simple and artificial² absoluteness, artificial absoluteness being a compromise between naive absoluteness and sheer relativity of thought. For believers the greatness of Christ is impossible apart from the experiences of His disciples. The faith of the church develops out of these experiences, passes through the supra-natural absoluteness of mystery-religion and the rational absoluteness of the apologists and Augustine, and issues in scholastic philosophy. In the process the gap is enormously widened between the absolute and the relative. Relativist thought becomes sin and error with a few sparks of truth. These sparks of truth the Church gathers on to her own sacred hearth and fans them into a mighty flame. All the great problems of humanity become problems of the

¹ Troeltsch distinguishes (like Bousset) between this absoluteness of Jesus and His veneration as Messiah and offering for sin. With this veneration, he says, the person was "verabsolutiert."

² künstlich.

Church, and in this latter development the religion of the Church resembles the other religions which claim universality.

Now this artificial absoluteness is simply a form of science. It is the official attempt of a group of believers to determine in the abstract the relation of their experience to the world as they know it. In Catholicism ¹ this official attempt is made through the scholastic philosophy, and ultimately through the infallibility of the Holy See. In Protestantism it is made by means of that dogma which provides a link in practical affairs between the natural and the supernatural, *i.e.* the inspiration of the Bible.

There has in recent times arisen a newly developed world-picture, produced by natural science, whose essential outlines conflict with those obtained by the two methods just recounted. And not only so. The methods of natural science have actually come to be applied to Christian origins, and therewith the old method of proving the absoluteness of Christianity has had to be abandoned. Even the statement of an evolutionist absoluteness which has followed now appears as an "artificial absoluteness" which breaks down before the real chronicle of events.

We return thus to the starting point of our enquiry, having done what we can to throw light upon it from all sides. It ought now to be possible to give some satisfactory answer both to the question with which we began and to the one which was stated at the beginning of this final section.

¹ Meaning of course Roman Catholicism.

Only superficial science alienates from God and only a superficial theory of events believes it can tear religion into a number of mutually contradictory absolutenesses. Our investigation has shown Christianity as making the freest and most general claim to absoluteness, and the only one which is essentially bound up with the soul of its Founder and not dependent upon a verbal statement. The *limits* of His simplicity merely witness to the fact that He identified Himself with the historical life and thought of His day. Essential Christianity is assured even if it be detached from its old theories. The "artificial absoluteness" of the apologists has done its work, and when its results become too heavy a burden, history shakes them off.

We can get back and feel the greatness of Jesus. Through Him we can feel the guiding hand of God, which follows us in history. We need not trouble about the unknown thousands of years past or future. It is enough for us to see the next step, and to know what we should wish and what we should do. It is vitally necessary to guard against the religious chaos and desolation which threaten on all sides. This enquiry does not claim to have dealt with the demands of the natural sciences for the restatement of Christianity. Its scope is confined to the historical sciences and the effort has been made to show that these most emphatically do not dissolve Christian Personalism and the confidence of Christian believers in its unique and great relation to the Absolute.

The changes and developments in dogmatics and pastoral theology constitute problems by themselves, and perhaps the most severe future developments lie here in store. But it is impossible to solve these problems unless our theoretical basis is sound. Granted that and the inevitable concessions and compromises will come of themselves.

The essay of Professor Troeltsch which we have just attempted to paraphrase and summarize is not his only contribution to the literature of the subject. In the year 1910 he wrote an article for the Review known as *Logos* entitled "The future possibilities of Christianity in relation to modern philosophy," to certain passages in which reference has already been made in the Introduction. It seems advisable to give here the outline of his whole argument. Troeltsch begins by defining his Christianity. He is not interested in the future possibilities of the traditionalists, but his Christian belief is of the sort to which the later writings of Professor Sanday have introduced us. In other words it is "enlightened," "liberal," and "free." He is, however, sympathetic towards Catholic modernism, which he says retains the apparatus of ecclesiastical authority, because it sees in it the protecting shell of a common religious spirit which is internally independent of it, but content to avail itself of the shell, until by the living appropriation of all modern thought it is enabled to expand into new future developments. He is no advocate of

secession, nor does he see any advantage in trying to found a new church.

After a short preface then he proceeds to state the problem. The question he says is whether in an age of unsettlement religion is to disappear altogether, or whether "free Christianity" can rescue it. He then deals with four difficulties which confront the liberal Christian.

1. The first of these is the clash between monism and anti-personalism on the one hand and Jewish-Christian theism and personalism on the other. His answer to this we have quoted in the Introduction.

2. The second is the growing difficulty of the Christian world in maintaining a proper estimate of the Person of Jesus, whose veneration as the uplifting and redeeming revelation of God is the only bond of union in a definitely Christian community.

3. The third is the growing difficulty of maintaining Christian ethics, based on regeneration and love, in the face of modern "this-worldliness," and in relation to the absolutely indispensable virtues of fortitude and justice which rule the struggle for existence.

4. The final problem is the dissolution of the common worship and organization of the devotional life through the ever-stiffening and endlessly subdivided individualism.

It will be seen that the second problem is fundamental in our present discussion and that the third and fourth follow it very closely. In dealing with

(2) Troeltsch leads us to much the same conclusion as in his "Absolutheit" essay. A few of his paragraphs, however, are worth quoting.¹ Speaking of the Person of our Lord he writes: "He is the embodiment of transcendent religious power ever newly depicted from age to age, whose heart-beat penetrates through the whole of Christendom, just as the beat of a ship's engines can be detected in every corner of the whole vessel. For this reason He remains a living Person wherever the Christian faith in God is proclaimed; and faith will only lift itself up to complete strength and assurance, triumphing over the poverty and weakness of mediocrity, by fixing its gaze steadfastly on such a personality as His. Since this is so it follows that with every achievement of the Christian faith in God, the portrait of Jesus retains a boundless vitality. A Christian mysticism, in which each believer discovers himself as a ray streaming forth from this central point, and the believers as a whole unite themselves ever anew in the devout interpretation and adoration of Jesus as the revelation of God re-inforced through centuries of historical development throughout the world,—that will remain for ever the kernel of all genuine and true Christianity as long as there be any such. Without that, even the belief in a personal God itself would drift away and die out."

Troeltsch sees, however, the difficulties connected with the geocentric and Christo-centric construction of history, and in a fine and outspoken passage he

¹ The English version is again my own.

struggles to overcome them, not I think quite so confidently as in his second edition of *Die Absolutheit*, but with a much greater clearness of expression :—

“ On the other hand, in all religions this connection between the great Author and the life which owes itself to Him is enhanced by the narrowing of the scope for new individual religious invention, so that labour is chiefly expended upon tradition and experience of the past. Here lies no insuperable difficulty, seeing that the feelings of the men of the day are so vacillating and uncertain. Only on one point is restriction necessary, namely on that which would construe Jesus as *centre* of the world or at any rate at least as centre of Human History, and would ground His essential significance thereupon.

“ The boundless extent of the universe bears along with it the assumption of an immeasurable plurality of spiritual kingdoms, among which the Kingdom of Humanity which has arisen with the biological evolution of the earth is only one, and can only find a place for itself in relation to a very much vaster cosmic life. Of a cosmic position and significance of Jesus, such as is contained in the church’s doctrine of Incarnation and Redemption, we cannot therefore speak apparently. But even the thought that the whole of humanity has its climax in Jesus, and its uplifting in the religious forces which appeared in Him, is hard to compass. The so-called liberal theology is accustomed to replace the old ecclesiastical Christology by this conception. Yet this awakes scruples. The vastness of the chronology

of human history, and the possibility of a gigantic change and breach in the conditions of development, the diversities of spiritual capability manifested by different types of civilization and race-groups, all these factors make it probable that there may be yet beside Christendom other conditions of religious society, which have their own redeemers and archetypes. Moreover it is conceivable that the whole European-Christian civilization might submerge, and that new and mighty religious creations might arise in some future hundred thousand years. In that case Jesus would remain the religious centre of the European-Christian world, which would possess in the life proceeding from Him and the prophets, and absorbing into itself the achievements of antiquity, the foundations of its existence, and which would bear forth the same into the world as the burden of its vital activities as long as it was capable of bringing it to distant peoples and races. In that case the endurance in health and soundness of the European-Christian religious life would depend proportionately upon its retention of itself in closest unity with its ancient and essential foundation; and conversely, with its downfall Christianity itself might die out.

“Such thoughts are possible, and their bare possibility excludes the hard and fast theory of a centralization of humanity upon Christianity and its accompanying absolute Christology. Yet we feel in spite of it the constant inward truth of Christianity, a current flowing in the direction of the strongest and most elemental forces of life

which help to maintain it against the attacks of the other religions which claim universality. As against Judaism and Islam the prophetic basis has more inwardness and greater capabilities of development ; it possesses greater freedom and life. Against the redemption cults of the East, the Kingdom of God, of the prophets and of Jesus, is *the* active and living power. Against Christianity all that has been previously urged would testify nought, if we regarded it as the deepest and most active among existing religious forces. Every truth which came at a later date would be bound to contain the truth enshrined in Christianity. Only it would need for such a different circle of existence, not to be confined to the Person of Jesus, but would then connect itself with other types and symbols. For us and our circle of existence, for our own life and our own impulse towards expansion, the religious idea of the prophets embodied and visible in the prophets and Jesus and in the higher humanity that goes forth from Him, remains the deepest and strongest source of life in God. We should find ourselves as before the presence of God, standing in the great circle of light which streams out from Jesus, and should only have the task of experiencing and laying hold of God in verity by the way ordained for us. And in doing that we should not need to worry ourselves over the fact that in the great divine world of life there might be other circles of light and other sources of light, or that in future periods of human history, perhaps in new ice-periods and in perfectly new formations, new

circles of illumination might build themselves up at a later date out of the depths of the divine life. For every circle and every general situation of affairs the everlasting divine truth has its special historical form, and can never lead towards falsehood because it is truth in essence. It will be contained in every succeeding truth in proportion as this is richer and deeper. Every epoch has immediate access to God, and we have immediate access in the circle of light that streams out from Christ. It is folly to believe that for an epoch so deeply rooted in Christianity and in the religious forces of antiquity which are allied to it, there can ever be a new religion. It will stand or fall with the religion that it has. The great problem of its existence will be whether it can conserve for itself this religious power, and transmit it with its entire spiritual content to the great new nations now entering the horizon of the world. By philosophic atheism, by the galvanization of Platonism and Stoicism stripped of their Christian accretions, or by means of the pure spiritual anarchy of the aphorisms of Nietzsche it will not be able to live."

The criticism of this long passage we must reserve till later.

It is to be noted that Troeltsch has no use for a this-worldly ethic. He is quite clear that Christian conduct is wholly religious, making individual morality an act of self-consecration to God, and social morality the unity of all God's children in God. Christian morality contradicts the instinct of modern this-worldliness. It is the ethic of a

super-world. It is not bred of nature and it leads out beyond nature. Its opposition of the Kingdom of God to the kingdom of the world, is its real greatness. Such an ethic has a heroic severity and noble simplicity. In its greatness it overcomes and bridges over the contradictions of the mundane life. Its very nature, however, exposes it more than any other system of ethics to the dangers of insincerity, and it is more sensitive to deep difficulties and tension in relation to the life of the world. Its difficulties, nevertheless, are not discoveries of the present. They have always been there. We are more generally conscious of them to-day because industry has enhanced the significance of this world for each person, and a sensuous art has illuminated the world of vision with a greater degree of refinement. It is equally indisputable that beside these hindrances there is growing a steady tendency in the direction of a timeless and eternal view of life and a greater interest in the future development of personality after the death of the body. Troeltsch concludes, therefore, that the Christian ethic has still almost undisturbed possession of the field, and his reasons for maintaining this are much the same as those given in his *Soziallehren*:—"The Christian ethic alone, on the ground of its personal Theism, has a conception of personality unmarred by naturalism and pessimism. On the ground of its belief in a Divine love all-embracing, it alone provides a really indestructible socialism. Only the Christian ethic brings with it something which no ordering of the community, however just and

rational, can completely supply, because in that ordering there still remain the incalculable elements, suffering, want, and sickness. Charity in the Christian sense alone can provide against these. Lastly, the Christian ethic puts a goal before the eyes of all, a goal which lies beyond the mere relativity of earthly life, and in relation to which everything only approximates. The thought of 'the Kingdom of God in the future,' (which is nothing else than the thought of the complete realization of the Absolute), does not empty the world of its value, as short-sighted opponents have maintained, but stimulates the energies of all, and strengthens the soul, in its conviction of a final future absolute purpose and goal to human work, which sustains it through all intermediary stages. It overcomes the world without negation of it, and it enlists our heroism in achieving the conquest."

In dealing with the problems of worship and organization, Troeltsch ventures to assert that the present system of privileged churches can hardly last another century and the construction of a new order of things will be one of the great tasks of the future leaders of church and state. He speculates as to the position likely to be assigned to Liberal Christianity in these organizations. To all appearance a new separate denomination in Europe is not to be thought of. He makes no effort to prophesy on the subject of the Roman communion, although in another place he has expressed some hopes that the influence of modernism may develop. He concludes :—" There can only be a question of room

and light inside the existing churches, with whose fundamentals free Christianity is closely united, and whose protestant organization has given naturalization to the subjective religious life and to criticism, which no one would be willing to renounce. For an indefinite time therefore the goal can only be to secure for as free a Christianity as possible a modicum of existence within protestantism, and yet to avoid the renunciation and loss of the great historical loyalties to the work of the reformers."

Troeltsch's final conclusion is that Christianity on its philosophical side must concern itself more and more closely with questions of personality, giving other matters secondary consideration, and making sure of what its own experience teaches it in the way of generalizations before it seeks to dominate the world with a *Weltanschauung*. Over against transcendentalism there stand to-day two essential objections. (1) "A purely psychologically-directed analysis of consciousness, which reduces all visible, absolute, valid, and eternally valuable conceptions to merely fleeting relative manifestations of changing circumstances, and (2) a pantheistic and relativist metaphysic dependent on (1), according to which everything which exists is only a substance in a state of transformation, whose essence in all its transformations is identical, so far as the idea of the unity of the world is not in general given up.

"There is no doubt that the Christian world of ideas does stand very near to the principles of transcendentalism and on the contrary finds itself

in strongest opposition to the principles of both these other groups. Perhaps it may be said that on the lines of *a priori* reasoning, the hypothesis of the transcendental systems itself already stands under the influence of the Christian point of view and its personalism. But that would only correspond to the fact that life itself is an inseparable unity, and that in philosophy the axioms of religion make themselves felt, just as in the shaping of religious thought are to be felt the definite results of scientific research. The deepest philosophical self-analysis here mingles itself with the root sentiment of the religious life. The validity of religious axioms so closely connected with transcendentalism no science can decide by itself, but the final appeal must be made to their correspondence with actual life. And on behalf of this personalism there is the constant testimony (which is purely scientific and philosophic) of the unanimous agreement of human minds that there exists somewhere absolute Reality and absolute Value. This testimony comes not only from religious but also from all other ideal regions of life, coupled with the consideration that in personalist religion this root conviction arrives at its full and clear religious expression.

“In this, and frankly only in this sense, can one say that the inward possibility of a free Christianity is vouched for by its relation to the most important and most profoundly thought out group of modern philosophical systems. If assent to the main principles of these systems be called a confession of faith in the Logos and his lordship over the world

which derives itself from Him in thought and expression, then (we remember) the faith of the Judæo-Christian religious world is also a faith in the Logos; and it becomes clear how present-day Christendom in spite of all differences, is one with the Christendom of the past, and that the belief in God revealed in Christ fuses into conjunction with the belief in the Logos in the world. That is not a mere play upon words, but to-day as ever the root of the matter."

An attempt at reconstruction following lines somewhat similar to those of Troeltsch is that given by Niebergall in his short monograph entitled, *Which is the best religion?*¹ The detail in this is not worked out so fully, and it may, therefore, be given almost verbatim:—

"An unavoidable question [in relation to the subject of his monograph] is that of the absoluteness of Christianity in its relation to other religions. Long and severe investigations have, in these latter years, led to the illumination of the various ideas associated with the expression so that we can to-day say in what sense we do or do not speak of absoluteness. Does absoluteness signify, in the literal sense, the freeing of Christianity from the trammels of evolution and development and earlier manifestations, and its association with definite regulations which are readily invested with the dignity of eternal law? Does absoluteness also mean that in

¹ In *Religionsgeschichtliche Völksbücher*. This is not as far as I know published in an English version.

contradistinction to other phenomena of a religio-historical sort, Christianity has come immediately from the hand of God? If so, then we are bound to discard it, as irreconcilable with our whole conception of the world and with the historical nature of Christianity. In this sense we can no longer be "supra-naturalists," *i.e.* that in Jesus alone we see a direct revelation—and in the other religions a mixture of separate stray streaks of revelation gleaming amid much darkness that is both earthly and human. It must be noted, however, that there is another sense of the word supra-naturalist, which denotes one who is confident of the existence of a higher spiritual plane of personal being, in which sense we ourselves naturally are all glad to agree in using it. The kind of supra-naturalism with which for the moment we are dealing, makes God too small and commonplace. We see outside the boundaries of Palestine that God is at work, bringing humanity to light. Cannot we then speak of absoluteness in the sense that the revelation which was completed in Jesus, and which has been developed by the unfolding of His Spirit, is unique and superior to all others? Indeed we can, joyfully and without reserve. Even if God has not only spoken in Jesus, even if He has told His will to every nation and group of civilized peoples in its own language, we believe that He has never shown Himself so clearly and so completely as He showed Himself to our circle of civilization in Jesus Christ. Naturally we do not limit or confine this revelation to the historical Person of Jesus of Nazareth, but I believe that as

every being is greater than itself, so the Christ in Jesus points and extends over beyond Him, in that He has something new to say to every age which it can apply from the study of His historical Personality to the satisfaction of its needs, or can set down as profit acquired under the shadow of His authority. That this revelation always bears the name of Jesus Christ is based upon the fact that the greatest fulness of the flood in the stream of revelation comes from this source, although many a stream may already have branched off in the upper waters of the river to fertilize some distant land and having flowed through it and been enriched by doing so, have then returned to its old water-course. One thing is certain, the content of revelation with its power and its blessing is concerned with more than one name. We do not believe in a God who spoke once, in order then to become dumb and to leave the word to His interpreters, who should quibble over its meaning. We believe, in the sense of the fourth Gospel, in a God who ever accompanies the progress of the revelation made to His humanity, with His moving and illuminating word. Now He speaks loud, now softly, ever in the same sense but not in the same dialect. Frankly we admit He has never spoken so loud as in Jesus, but He speaks again softly in the same manner to every age as it understands Jesus, according to what it can hear of Him, and according to the measure wherein its faith can apprehend the Voice of His Spirit. The absoluteness of Christianity consists only in the sense that God is no dumb, dead being,

but a living God ; that He is not bound to a past age, but accompanies visibly every epoch of the great development, and indeed Himself in reality leads it on, suffering it to bloom and decay, in order that He may be to new ages and in new manners the same God, strong and faithful.

From these considerations the meaning appears clearly of that much debated word, the "unsurpassability"¹ of Christianity. What does Christianity signify? Every earlier form of Christianity is surpassed by a later one, which owes its origin to a deeper understanding of the classical biblical age, and also very often of other extra-biblical factors. We believe fearlessly, nay much more, with joyful hope, that even our present stage in the development of Christianity will be superseded through deeper insight into that classical age, and that new movements will loom up out of the future to improve and amplify the present form of our Christianity. But we believe all the same, that there will be no form which will not have taken up so many of the fundamentals, so much of the spirit and essence of our whole Christian development into itself, as to compel us to deny it the name of Christianity. The forces arising out of the historical New Testament form of Christianity are so numerous, strong, and inevitable, that justice demands that this combination of them should be expressed through the designation which binds the common inheritance of the various phases with one another. If the contention is made by many that on account

¹Unüberbietbarkeit.

of the sad memories which surround the name "Christianity," the designation "religion" should be given to that phenomenon of the ages, instead of the name which it has usually borne, those who make such a contention overlook the fact that much more power dwells in the concrete than in the abstract.

Therefore, Unsurpassability—*No*: if it is a question of our present understanding of Christianity in thought and life.

Unsurpassability—*Yes*: if it is a question of the Christ who was in Jesus, Who gives of His Spirit to the spirits of every age, in order to lead the ages higher, if it is a question of understanding God as the Being of everlasting and holy purpose Who is leading humanity to an ever deeper apprehension of the content of that purpose, and who strives to express Himself as holy and eternal, through the terms of our speech, though they but feebly convey the essence of what He is."

CHAPTER VI

SOME REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING ATTEMPTS AT RECONSTRUCTION

ONE approaches the task of comment and criticism upon Troeltsch with a good deal of diffidence. The majesty of his argument and the scientific caution with which his judgment is seasoned make it no light and easy task to disagree with him, and with much that he says one can hardly fail to be in sympathy. I do not think, however, that it is possible to accept the whole of his argument without a murmur. A few reflections upon it are therefore inevitable.

I. I must confess to a whole-hearted admiration for the courage with which Troeltsch faces the arguments against the absoluteness of Christianity. There is no shirking. So resolutely does he encounter the points which make for relativity, that he seems to knock away one prop after another, until he threatens to leave us devoid of all sure foundations. A kind of Einstein of the religious world, he appears at one stage almost to admit that we do not know whither we are going. Yet we are not left utterly in the grip of a critical uncertainty. Between the

first and second editions of the *Absolutheit* and also between the *Zukunftsmöglichkeiten* and the second edition of the *Absolutheit* development is noticeable. The honesty and caution of the philosopher are reaping their reward. He is growing more sure of his position, and the fine passage in section iv. is worthy to be compared with the best chapters in the famous *Analogy* which treat of probability as the guide of life. In a general way I think that the reader will benefit most if he quietly reads through this account of Troeltsch's great essay and tries to learn all he can from it before daring to criticise.

2. It is then possible to make some qualifications. First of all, in the general valuation of Christianity, I do not think "non-miraculous" is a very happy term. What is intended is perfectly clear, *i.e.* that there is no artificial distinction between the natural and the supernatural, and that the whole world of phenomena, and not a certain abnormal part of it, lies under the control of the Spirit of God. But this is a positive confession of faith, and the word "non-miraculous" is negative, and suggests that something has been excised from the Gospels, whereas, with a few exceptions it is not a question of excision but of reconciliation. One would prefer to substitute for the expression "non-miraculous Christianity" in Troeltsch's essay, the phrase "personalistic Christianity," and couple with it what has been said in the Introduction about the need for restraint in the evidential use of the abnormal phenomena which accompanied the Perfect Manhood of Our Divine Lord.

In the second place, the general conclusions form an admirable philosophical setting for the Historical Jesus of Mr. Glover, but just as we have seen that that reading of history omits or undervalues some of the essential features of Christianity as a definitely historical thing, so its appropriate philosophical setting is not free from the limitations of the liberal German school which undervalues the traditional Messianic estimate of our Lord. It is not enough to say, as Mr. Glover does, that there were various notions of the Messiah, that the term "Messiah" was as vague as the present-day term "socialism," and that, therefore, in our estimate of Jesus of Nazareth, we can afford to lay less stress upon it. To me it seems that if Jesus of Nazareth was not in some sense "He who should come," then the whole line of Hebrew national intuition was utterly at fault in evolution and development. Jesus was in some sense Messiah just as He was in some sense, Prophet, and in some sense Rabbi. The offices are in no wise mutually exclusive. But Jesus was not simply the proclaimer of the Gospel. He *was* the Gospel. He is Actor as well as Teacher. The tone of the last paragraph but two in section iii. seems to show that Troeltsch is conscious of this historical basis of Christianity, but he does not develop the theme beyond a few phrases in the final section.

In the third place it is certainly true, as Mezger has said, that when Troeltsch declares that the characteristic function of Christianity is to be the crystallization point of the highest and best in the inner life of man, his statement, however plausible

and attractive, is not strictly accurate, and therefore weakens the structure of the argument in which it occurs. Christianity has often absorbed not the best but the least worthy elements in other religions. Thus the Dean of St. Paul's points out¹ that "it is permissible for a Christian to admit what it is difficult for a historian to deny—that none of the three nations, Greek, Roman or Hebrew was permitted to bring its best to build up the grand edifice called the Catholic Church. All three had passed through disillusionment and defeat; all three were, in a sense, in a state of senile decay." It is really more important to note that Christianity differs from and contrasts with other religions, and it is just those differences that mark it off from them which are its most precious possession. The points of agreement arrest the attention of a theologian, but do not capture the popular fancy. To this the picturesque, the traditional, or the magical are the natural elements to be absorbed, the things which will bring a high and difficult religion down to the level of the average, and make it easy.

In Troeltsch's other essay, written at an earlier date, the note of Absoluteness is less assured than in his later writings. Here he seems to hold out the possibility of the development of "new circles of illumination" and "other *sources* of light." It is well that we should look these speculations in the face. They must occur to many who never dare to put them into words for fear of eliciting a shocked exclamation of disapproval. Yet it would be much better if they were talked out fearlessly

¹ *The Church and the Age*, ch. 3.

to a finish. Covert uncertainty is the certain decay of all authority. If Jesus is not in some real sense to us final and absolute, morals and eschatology are at once in the melting-pot. If we could be sure that His successor had not yet come, we might make ourselves content with what we had got. But if a successor is contemplated, who will avail to prevent differences of opinion as to his advent? Troeltsch in his longer essay seems to me to give us some satisfactory reasons on a large and general scale for rejecting the relativist outlook, but it is impossible to stop there. We must work out their implications and carry the enquiry more closely into matters of detail, as indeed I have tried to do in this book. The confident optimism of Niebergall hardly calls for comment and need not detain us here. His assurances are of less value than those of one who has looked his worst doubts full in the face, but yet one is glad to have them, and they probably represent a sturdy body of scholarly commonsense which, although its strength lies in its poise rather than in its penetration helps us undoubtedly to feel that while God may have and probably has other words for other worlds, yet for this world His Word is Christ, or rather that the word of God is one for the whole Universe, but that it is embodied and shown forth for the inhabitants of this planet in the drama of which Jesus of Nazareth is Historical Centre.

A third essay upon Christian philosophy comes from the valued pen of Prof. Wendland of Basel,¹

¹ *Ztschr. für Theologie u. Kirche*, 1914; "Philosophie und Christentum" in Prof. Ernst Troeltsch.

and as it affords us the view of a contemporary upon the writings of Troeltsch, it seems worth while to give some attention to it. It is probable that Wendland's critique may have been overlooked, since it appeared at a time when Europe was rapidly drifting into war. Wendland begins by paying a tribute to the courageous way in which Troeltsch has set theology to undertake new and far-reaching tasks. It is true as he points out that Troeltsch has promised a much greater and completer synthesis at some time in the future, but he no doubt wisely takes account of the Professor's advancing years, and justly recognizes that he has already published enough matter to make it possible to form a considered opinion upon his work. He then goes on to define Troeltsch's position. He holds him chiefly to have affinities with Schleiermacher and German idealism. He is in line with Ritschl in recognizing that Christianity can never be identical with an aesthetic pantheistic monism, and like Ritschl he holds a faith in a personal God with a strong emphasis on the ethical side of religion. He is, however, an opponent of Hegelian intellectualism, and also of the antithesis which is often to be found among the officials of our organized Christianity between reason and faith, as though they were mutually incompatible. His antithesis is between the rational and the irrational, between "Logos and Mythos." He is under the influence of Lotze and Fechner, and he has a slight affinity with Eucken. His general theology is, however, mainly determined by his study of universal history. In this respect

he is akin to Dilthey and also to Ritschl, though the latter confined himself to the historical study of the central problems of Christianity, whereas Troeltsch considers the forces which influence it from outside.

What is Troeltsch's idea of the function of philosophy? It is first concerned with the object of perception. He estimates the results to be gained from the observation of the external world of nature, of the phenomena of the spiritual life and of history. It is only later that he is concerned with questions of the theory of perception. His philosophy is essentially a philosophy of history. Religion is to Troeltsch an independent creation of our human spirit; it is not a mere accompaniment of metaphysics or ethics. Troeltsch recognizes the element of faith that lies in science. Belief in the trustworthiness of reason is really a religious belief. It is the quiet confidence that the honest pursuit of truth can never lead us to destruction. Wendland refers to the opposition which was raised to this system of philosophy in 1898 by Kaftan. But he points out that Troeltsch's arguments on the side of Christianity are intended for the believer and he holds that if they are limited in this way they are of great value to many.

It remains to Wendland to describe the religious philosophy of Troeltsch and he does so in a series of propositions.

1. All religion is to be brought into a common line.
2. The history of religions considered in this way seems a confusion, and it behoves us to find if we can a purpose in the confusion.

3. Christianity is one religion among the others, and its history is inextricably entwined with theirs. Judaism, beset by Persian, Babylonian and Egyptian influences, was the seed-plot of Christianity. Christianity in its early growth was, in its turn, influenced by the mystery religions, by Platonism and Stoicism.

4. Christianity must not be isolated or regarded as exempt from the operation of the laws which govern the development of other religions.

What, asks Troeltsch, are we to regard as the goal of all this development? Hartmann, Drews and others have found it in a Pantheistic mysticism. Troeltsch inclines to the belief that the balance which has to some seemed so fixed and steady is really in favour of a personalistic theism of a redemptive character.

Wendland, in summarizing the reasons given by Troeltsch for holding Christianity to be absolute, remarks that he considers the caution of Troeltsch to be dictated by his keen sense of honour. He prefers to say too little rather than too much, and only to emphasize those positions which he is sure he can defend.

Some account is next given of the attacks made by Reischle, Traub, Kaftan and Mezger upon these propositions. They declare that neutrality in dealing with religion as a whole is but an illusory appearance—it is in fact not really possible. Even Troeltsch is under the influence of his own faith. They consider that he confuses faith and science. His own work does not make it clear that the

scientific investigation of religion only establishes the fact that the devout person believes in the real presence of God. It cannot justify this faith. Similarly it appears from Troeltsch as though historical investigation were able to establish only that Christianity is the highest of all the religions so far encountered in the course of history. It is objected, however, that this construction is not the work of scientific investigation but one of faith. Wendland is here inclined to side with Troeltsch. Not only, as he points out, does Troeltsch frankly admit that the axiom of the absolute truth of Christianity is a religious and not a scientific axiom, but also the science of which his opponents speak is exclusively physical science, from which all personal convictions are rightly excluded. It is not possible to exclude personal conviction from the scientific study of the spiritual order. In this connection Wendland brings out the relation of dogma to religion. Dogma is not so much scientific statement as personal confession. It is valuable and necessary as the confession of a scientifically educated being, but in itself it is not science. Wendland thinks Troeltsch has definitely broken away from pure rationalism so that it is almost possible to speak of his irrationalism. All religion, he says, is a work of freedom and a gift of grace, an operation of the super-sensual which breaks through the natural phenomena of our ordinary experience, and a deed of free surrender superseding the action of nature. It would seem that Troeltsch prefers to place religion in opposition

to agnosticism rather than to rationalism, since he is ready to allow some element of rationalism even to religion. Agnosticism, however, leaves an uncertainty round the final issues, while religion maintains a greater certainty.

Wendland concludes as follows :—“ The final question is whether one may be permitted to regard the distinction between the Judæo-Christian religion and the others as one of kind or one of degree, in other words, whether one can speak of a gradually evolving revelation of God traversing the whole history of religion, or whether the judgment is just : ‘ God has only revealed Himself in the people of Israel and in Jesus, and has been hidden in the founders of other religions.’ Is it possible so to describe the difference as to say that in all the other religions there is a seeking and yearning after God, but no answer of God, that the structure of religion is to be found in them but that the object of religion is lacking, while in Christianity alone God has given the answer to the question of the human heart ? A decision upon this alternative is difficult, since the dealings of God are not to be ascertained through scientific investigation. Is the enlightenment which the Buddha attained under the Bo-tree a ray of divine sunshine ? Has God in reality revealed Himself to Zoroaster or Mohammed ? The answer to these questions depends upon the value we assign to the religion which proceeded from experiences such as theirs. The verdict, that God has revealed Himself ‘ by divers portions and in divers manners,’ not merely through the prophets

of Israel but also through the prophets of other nations, is only an extension of the thought common to Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the writer of the Prologue to the fourth Gospel. We can only study the religions of the world and value them according to their standard. Such a valuation will indeed place the religious mysticism of India high up in the scale. The consuming fire of faith in God attains there to an intensity which is peculiarly its own. Nevertheless the ethical religion of the prophets is superior to it. If, however, we compare not merely the heights but also the depths of religious history, then it is certain that both in Judaism and in Christianity the faith of the people has often taken on undeniably inferior forms which have much in common with paganism. The study of religion in the hands of Troeltsch and Schleiermacher first places the religions of the world side by side, and includes Christianity in the ranks only in order to demonstrate its overwhelming superiority. In this connection I must indeed maintain in agreement with Troeltsch that the Platonists, Stoics, Brahmins and Buddhists, in spite of all elevation above the world of the senses, require a conversion and change of heart as the condition of true fellowship with God and true peace. Most assuredly they do attain to God and are uplifted and blessed by the experience of God which is theirs. But this experience cannot suffice them in the face of all the experiences of life, and does not render them capable of attacking the ethical tasks of life in a versatile manner. It follows from this that

the old civilizations of Asia need not merely education and uplifting but also conversion to Christ. Certainly the Christian who has found full satisfaction in his faith will be in a position to maintain the place of Christianity as the final religion with greater confidence than Troeltsch. The future can merely hold the task of bringing Christianity (which has hitherto been only in the earlier stages of its realization), to its full accomplishment. Even the ancient civilized peoples of Asia will have not merely to complete those things in their equipment which seem resemblances to Christianity, but also in addition to the approximations and syncretisms which will probably not be wanting, consciously accept the Person of Jesus as the full expression of those elements of truth which were already in their midst. But that our present civilization will ever disappear and a new one take its place, centred upon another Mediator, is in the state of humanity to-day, growing as it is towards unification, improbable. Faith has therefore good grounds for continuing to believe that a higher than the Christian Gospel cannot be conceived, and that it is the goal of all history, so that all nations will come at length to recognize Jesus as the Lord and Mediator of their faith. From this conclusion it will become ever clearer and clearer that we place the revelation of God given in the Person of Jesus, together with the history preceding it in Israel in opposition to the other revelations of God. I admit that the old terms 'natural' and 'supernatural' revelation as ways of distinguishing these

from one another, seem to me inapplicable. But the unique superiority of this religion leads on to the judgment of faith, *i.e.* that God has disclosed Himself in the Person of Jesus in a unique way, which, in spite of all analogies, is yet bound to be set against the other revelations of God. From this there is disclosed to me a better understanding for that 'exclusive supra-naturalism' to which Troeltsch, in all his writings, is opposed. It is the perception that God has indeed revealed Himself in many peoples as in many prophets. But the revelation in Christ assumes such a unique superiority *that it gradually merges into a fundamental distinction.* In this conviction one is compelled to agree with Troeltsch. One cannot lift the Person of Jesus out of its historical context. One cannot remove from Jesus as personified archetype all the limitations which belong to Him as Man. But if the perfect religion and the perfect morality have been founded through Him, then the absolute God and the absolute goal, the Kingdom of God, must be held to be most closely linked with their realization in Jesus."

I cannot refrain from the personal confession that in spite of admiration for the courage and penetration of Troeltsch I feel a humble preference for these concluding words of Wendland. He seems to me to have helped us nearer to a conclusion than anyone else has done.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER EFFORTS AT RECONSTRUCTION

It is important to recognize that in addition to the efforts to provide Christianity with its proper setting in the world which we have just been describing, other attempts have been made, which, while they do not take into account as many factors and possibilities as the essay of Troeltsch, are nevertheless types and instances of the methods by which our subject has been and is still being approached.

I

First in order must be considered the work of that group of religious thinkers commonly summed up as Unitarians. In controversy it is sometimes the fashion to include all liberal German theologians under this head, and although there is some justification for this, it is not strictly scientific, since the term Unitarian properly denotes a succession of theologians beginning with the English disciples of Sozzini and ending in our own time with Martineau, Wicksteed and their American confrères.

The essence of the original Unitarian position was that while accepting the authority of the Bible, it expressly denied the Divinity of Christ and the Triunity of the Divine Nature as unscriptural, and in reaction against the severe Calvinistic doctrine of the Person of God laid stress upon the tenderer aspects of His Fatherhood. The earlier Unitarians were as much attached to the text of the Bible as any old-fashioned Evangelical, but the discarding of the traditional doctrine of our Lord's Person opened the way for speculation, and there came gradually to develop in New England, the great stronghold of Unitarianism, an identification of its exponents with the most vigorous intellectual life of the United States. The same is to some extent true of our own country and to the names already mentioned may be added those of Priestley and Stopford Brooke. But now we arrive at the essential point. As soon as Christ comes to be treated merely as the last and best of the Jewish prophets, and the originator of a great body of thought and conduct, the development and application of which we have inherited, so soon does it become a vital question: "Is Christ the Climax or is He not?" If He is the Climax, then there can be no new contribution greater than His, but only interpretation. If He is not the Climax then He can only be of passing interest, and when His special contribution has received the tribute due to it, the pilgrim must needs pass on in search of a new prophet. It is plain that of these two classes only the former can lay claim in any way to the name

Christian. Hence the tendency of those who belong to it to style themselves Unitarian Christians or Liberal Christians. Other Unitarians cannot logically limit themselves to an interest in Christ, and to dependence upon the Christian sacred books. They may or may not recognize Christ as "the best and highest spiritual achievement of humanity as far as it has yet developed," but they are free to consider any number of successors to fill His place, and even, if they like, to dispute his present claim to supremacy.

In marked contrast to this, Unitarian Christians find themselves inevitably led back to a re-consideration of traditional Christianity. Christ to them may be only a human being, a great prophet or spiritual leader, but He is confessedly to them the focus of all human spiritual life, the climax of all human spiritual achievement. In some sense or other, they hardly know in what, He brings them nearer to the Divine Presence than any other human being, and they look for no Saviour beyond Him. Something tells them that Jesus is "He Who should come," and they do not expect any successor to Him. It is this spirit and conviction that is to be found in William Channing, Theodore Parker, Emerson, J. R. Lowell, and their followers and disciples. As the study of Christology has been pursued since their day men have come to see that the words "God," "humanity," "Divine," are not lightly to be defined and set aside. The mystery of the two natures of Our Lord admits of many interpretations, and it is neither just nor

necessary to insist negatively that He was *not* in any sense Divine. To the Liberal Christian He mediates God and has the value of God, and that carries Liberals and traditionalists a very long way towards agreement. Further, the study of psychology has greatly diminished the importance of the word "Unitarian." It is no longer either necessary or just to deny the Trinity in order to insist on the unity. We are debarred from supposing less complexity in the Divine Nature than in our own, and the threefold experience of the Christian believers in God as Transcendent Father, as Incarnate Redeemer, and as Immanent Spirit, each revealing, as it were, a permanent element of God's being,—this experience can find no symbol in which to express itself, short of the Triunity of God.

But the Unitarian Christian has left his flank exposed. It is still open to his adversaries to say : If you stress the Humanity of Christ, give us your reasons for holding that in Him Humanity attained its spiritual zenith. The reconstruction of the Liberal Christians is here weak, mainly, as it seems to me, because they have insisted chiefly on the *preaching* of Jesus. He is a teacher by example and life, if not by word : He exhibits the *mind* of God.

Now the essential point of the traditionalists is that Christ is God in Action ; and there is as far as I can see nothing to prevent the Liberal Christians from accepting Him equally as such. If they do, however, they must adjust their description of the way in which He unfolds the character of God.

It is not merely His gracious words, His Beatitudes, His parables, His individual acts and words of love and mercy. It is His Life taken as a dramatic whole, with a unity of purpose leaving it to be summed up in the supreme Sacrifice. That is the essential point, the neglect of which leaves the Unitarian-Christian position incomplete. The Crucifixion is not the martyrdom of *a man*. It is the martyrdom of God, and not merely a martyrdom, a witness to a truth centred on some one else, but rather *the Act* to which all martyrdoms bear testimony, the Act and Fact that God was prepared to risk *Himself* in order to secure that the Universe should run true, the Act which was His way of demonstrating His Character to this planet.

It will doubtless be replied at this point that a theologian such as Dr. Kirsopp Lake finds no difficulty in accepting the apocalyptic interpretation of the life of Christ with its stress upon His action as the inaugurator of a new kingdom, rather than upon His preaching of a way of life, while at the same time telling us that we must give up the notion of an infallible Christ. I admit that Dr. Lake's liberal Christianity presents many points of contact with American Unitarianism. There are touches in him which remind one of Emerson, and he has in his straightforward honesty a close affinity with that great master, whose memorable words spoken to ordination candidates:—

“Let their doubts feel that you have doubted, and their wonder feel that you have wondered.”

deserve to be engraven over the gate of every

theological college. But Dr. Lake's virtues lead him sometimes into the deliberate use of blunt, one will not say provocative language. He seems anxious to shock "because he knows it teases," and one misses the sympathy, the reverence, and the humility, with which one would have expected an avowedly honest man to approach the Hero who, at very least, perished in devotion to an idea that is still too great for the rulers of this world. It is a pity. Perhaps the virtues are there, hidden for fear of being misunderstood. I do not think it is necessary to go as far as Prof. Lake suggests.

One supposes that to admit the self-limitation of the Word of God in the sense in which it is described by a nineteenth century saint of the Church of England, is *ipso facto* to renounce the infallibility of Christ. It is not by any means certain that we are really bound to go as far as this in accepting the limitation of our Lord's human knowledge. But even if we are, it is surely a salve for startled apprehensions to find that the clear faith of Forbes Robinson¹ was in no way beclouded by it. On the other hand there is every reason to suppose that our Lord's forecast of the future has been transmitted to us by chroniclers who only partially understood Him, so that any foreshortening that appears is probably a combination of the facts, (1) that the Divine Word had to express Himself through a human medium, (2) that the tendency of all Hebrew prophets was to give an artistic and ideal description of the future rather than a historically accurate one, (3) that

¹ *The Self-Limitation of the Word of God.* Forbes Robinson.

the chroniclers not only manifestly confuse the immediate downfall of Jerusalem with the judgment that is to end life on this planet but also obscure the essential features of Christ's teaching by here and there intermixing it with utterances which are probably not His own and which are wholly under the influence of contemporary sentiment and framed in the literary form of the period.¹

If we bear these qualifications in mind we see at once that the acceptance of our Lord's self-limitation is not such a terrible thing as at first appears. We are learning steadily that the only true infallibility is that of holy love. Intellectual truth is not reached according to the purpose of God by any short cut, and if our Lord had been naturally endowed as touching His manhood with the pre-suppositions of the modern scientific age, His would not have been a true incarnation into the world of the first century. It is greatly to be questioned whether our Lord's view of the future is consistently described for us by His interpreters. They misunderstood Him in many things, and He openly deplores their lack of vision. May they not have misunderstood Him in this?

Where we feel safe in accepting their testimony is in the plain matter of conduct. Mr. Glover remarks, "The twelve are with Jesus under all sorts of circumstances . . . they saw Him in privation, fatigued, exhausted. With every chance to see weakness in His character, they did not find much amiss with Him . . . they lived with Him all the

¹ See chapter iii. p. 99.

time, in a genuine human friendship, a real and progressive intimacy. They were with Him in popularity and in unpopularity; they were with Him in danger . . . but friendship depends not only on great moments; it means companionship in the trivial, it means idle hours together, partnership in commonplace things . . . His attitude . . . is to these men a constant revelation of character." This is the true test of infallibility. When we see that the love of Jesus manifested in this ordinary intercourse pursued its way without once faltering, right up to its crowning achievement in the choice and endurance upon the cross, and that this love is regarded by Him as the ultimate proof of His Messiahship, we feel that there is no more need to renounce His essential infallibility in all that matters. Moreover, very much remains to be explored as regards the meaning of the terms "sainthood," "Christian perfection," and "the unitive life." Until we know much more about the capabilities of human nature when illumined and uplifted by the Grace of God in Christ, it behoves us to speak with the utmost caution and reverence about the *unique* impeccability of our Blessed Master.¹

Considerable attention has been devoted to this question of English speaking Unitarianism of the Liberal Christian type, for various reasons. In the first place it needs to be remembered that its Christology is as yet far from complete, but is shaping and finding its way. It took the primitive

¹ See Tennant, *The Concept of Sin*, Appendix; and also Wesley and others, on the doctrine of Christian Perfection.

church 381 years to arrive at the creed of Constantinople and another fifty to reach the Chalcedonian definition. It is therefore rather soon to expect reformed Christianity, which has, one supposes, only begun to explore for itself since the Peace of Westphalia, to have arrived at a full and proper conception of the Personality of Jesus, or to suppose that either Latin, Eastern or Anglo-Saxon Christology can be complete in itself. It is well to remember the dicta of Mr. Glover, "There is more in Him than we have yet accounted for," and Professor Burkitt, "He cannot be comprehended under any modern formula." In the second place there is a mischievous tendency to depreciate Unitarian Christians. Theologians of Latin sympathies all too easily overlook the undeniable fact that many men of our race who have revered our Lord as the unfoldment to them of the Divine, and have striven to shape their lives as He would have approved, come under this category. Such an one if we may believe Lord Charnwood was Abraham Lincoln,¹ and the world of lay Christians that prays and works in communion with its Master, but has often fought shy of ecclesiastical politics can furnish many sturdy instances to match. The suspicion that a direct denial of our Lord's Divinity is the precursor of the fading away of vital Christianity is not an ungrounded one. But the phrase, "the Divinity of our Lord" can well wait for its definition until the disciples of Christ

¹ Wm. Ellery Channing's denunciations of slavery were quite as eloquent and influential as those of any orthodox Christian.

have assured themselves that He is final, and not a milestone in the search after a silent deity. Once they come to regard Him as the climax in a great Act of God, they will be led to ponder more deeply the proper mode by which they may fitly express such a manifestation, and it is the personal belief of the writer that they will be led step by step to a Christology¹ which, if it is not exactly that of Chalcedon or Athanasius, will be as full, as rich, and as thorough as any hitherto conceived.

¹ See in this connection, Du Bose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*.

NOTE.—Arnold Meyer, the Swiss theologian of Zurich, thus sums up his little book *Was uns Jesus heute ist*.

“In the realm of religion Jesus has now spoken the answering word and solved the riddle. Paul and Luther stand truly under the influence of his spirit. Mohammed took Jewish and Christian-gnostic ideas and imposed them on the Arabian world. Buddha brought no religion, but taught a renunciation of all religion, of God, of life, of a life in God. Confucius is a teacher of morals. Zoroaster is much too indefinite a being for us to reckon with him. Only the prophets of Israel, to whose line Jesus also belongs, are to us sure historical guides on the road to God. Jesus stands at the end of their line. He takes from them the Holy, Almighty, Merciful and Gracious God, the inwardness of religion, the care for the oppressed among the people. Thus far is He dependent; He is a human being who belongs to humanity. But next we place the fact that He, though in the line of the prophets, attained to the goal before they did. He saw into the heart of God *and was at home there*. He alone dared to say and was able to maintain that man should become perfect as God; that God loved his enemy, and so man should and could love his enemy in turn; He understood and alone could grasp that God’s whole being and essence were love, and that we should find our essence therein.”

"To make use of this discovery is no more unworthy than to make use of anything else which has been laid bare for our benefit. Yet no discovery and no use is of greater profit. Jesus was minded not to keep it for Himself but to share it with others, even at risk of His life. And He desired not to undermine our personality, but to render it free and independent."

This is a fair statement of the Unitarian Christian position to-day, and shows very well its merits and its limitations. It sees clearly that *the* Divine Revelation is given in Jesus. But it shrinks from what Bousset would call the "*verdoppelte*" devotion which identifies the Divine in Jesus with the Lord of all good life, and which therefore pays to Jesus the devotion due to the One Almighty God, because it believes Jesus to be that God in Action.

II

The next attempt to systematize Christianity which must be noticed is the well known one connected with the name of Harnack. Adolf Harnack is essentially a historian. It will be remembered that he begins with the assumption that there is one fundamentally original idea, namely the Fatherhood of God, which constitutes the gospel proclaimed by Christ. This essential gospel is then traced through its various developments, Greek, Latin, and Teutonic. Harnack's preference is obviously given to post-Reformation Christianity, in which he feels that there is a movement back towards the original gospel. In the Fatherhood of God, with all its implications, he conceives that we are dealing with essential religion. In his opinion no other form of religion need henceforth be taken into consideration.

This clear and attractive attempt at the reduction of Christianity to its simplest terms received wide attention at the time. The lectures in which it was expounded were publicly delivered in Berlin, and were attended by crowds of people of all sorts and conditions. Nevertheless there were many critics. The traditionalists were naturally unable to accept an interpretation of Christianity which diverted attention from Christ back to the God He preached, and regarded Him merely as a revered teacher who revealed the great truth of God's Fatherhood. But there were other critics. Writers of the type of Schmiedel were disposed to enquire whether there might not be a further discovery or revelation of the Divine Character. Why should Christianity be supposed equivalent to religion? The adherents of the Christ-myth school (the chief representative of which is Drews) asked why it was necessary to suppose that the essential gospel was inevitably bound up with the historical existence of Jesus. They claimed to possess evidence that He never actually lived, and that the story of His life had arisen out of various nature-myths and their dramatic representations. According to this argument, if the Fatherhood of God is a fact, it does not matter whether it is arrived at by one person or by several, any more than it matters whether Homer is the name of a real man or the personification of a school of bards, so long as we are all agreed that the Iliad exists and that as an epic it is of rare beauty. This argument does not necessarily at first dispute the finality of the Christian Gospel,

but in the face of it it is very difficult for writers of the school of Harnack and Bousset to show the necessity for maintaining the historicity and ultimately the finality of Jesus. Professor Burkitt carefully demonstrated in an interesting article¹ written shortly before the war, that the weak spot in the liberal-protestant armour is its wilful tendency to regard our Lord as Preacher, and that the only sure defence against an attitude of indifference as to whether our Lord ever existed or not, is to recognize not only the evidence for His historicity but (what is much more important) the persistent assertion from the very first moment of its birth that Christianity is not a sermon but an Act of God, performed in time, prepared for from everlasting, and with consequences extending into the infinite future. Professor Burkitt's argument is not only of value against the Christ-myth school, but it is also a satisfactory defence against the tendency lightly to regard the finality of the Christian religion.

III

Arising out of the criticism of Harnack's book, the modernist creed of M. Loisy developed itself. According to this writer the most extreme critical view of the New Testament is permissible, and Jesus of Nazareth becomes an amiable but deluded Galilean prophet, who died broken-hearted upon the gallows. His career, however, is not the essence of Christianity. It is only the first stage

¹ *Comment and Criticism*, Cambridge, 1914.

in the construction of a great corpus of religious dogma and devotion. There is no primitive essence of Christianity, and Christianity is simply that which it has become, and will be in the future that which it will become. Apart from its somewhat strained attachment to the quintessence of New Testament criticism, this view seems to make Christianity merely identical with the course of events, and it is not surprising to find that as a final position it has failed to satisfy M. Loisy, who has now abandoned it for a belief which makes no pretence of calling itself Christian, and which seems to have strong affinities with the group theories of M. Durkheim, the unanimism of Miss Jane Harrison and the community-worship of Professor Royce, besides being influenced by the tide of patriotism which was running strongly in France at the time when he wrote his book. Some critics will have it that Prof. Lake and his school are moving in the same direction. Time alone can show whether this be true.

M. Leroy is another type of French pragmatic modernist. He claims the right to interpret dogmas in the language of practical action. Thus "God is Our Father" is not to be taken as a full dogmatic statement of the nature of God. It simply means that we are to behave towards God as sons towards a father. This is "the whole duty of man." Similarly "God is personal" means that we are to behave towards Him as we should towards a human person. "Jesus is risen" means that we are to regard Him as if He were our contemporary. The dogma of

the Real Presence means that we ought to have the same feelings before the Blessed Sacrament which we should have had in the presence of the visible Christ. "Let the dogmas be interpreted in this way, and no one will dispute them." Such an attitude is to be found in the English writings of Fr. Tyrrell, where the test of truth for a dogma is declared not to be its correspondence with phenomenal fact, but its prayer-value.

I must at this point recall the reader to what I have written about modernism in the introduction. I quite readily concede that the Personality and Fatherhood of God are concepts too great for our puny minds fully to realize. But at least we are sure that the ultimate realities are not less great, not less glorious, than the utmost that our human symbols of word and action are capable of representing. When it comes to the denial of the action of God in history, and to the general assumption that "prayer-value" is the chief value in the Incarnation, I stop short. This is the Christ-myth coming in by a side-door. I do not pretend to know exactly the whole content of the life and spiritual experiences of Jesus of Nazareth. But I am quite sure that we are meant to take them and are justified in taking them as belonging to the world of historical fact, and that the life was lived and the experiences were undergone *in time*. Neither life nor experiences can be treated as mere symbols, "a soul-drama, true in spirit but not in fact." Such treatment of them is utter distortion.

IV

The literary productions of Professor Eucken rival in bulk those of Troeltsch, and if this treatise does not review them at the same length, it is only for the reason that on the one hand all of them are accessible in English and that on the other they display an investigation conducted on very similar lines to that of Troeltsch though leading to less satisfactory conclusions.

Eucken was awarded the Nobel prize in 1908. He has won many disciples both in this country and in his own, and to many of them his attitude on the outbreak of war no doubt brought keen disappointment. For the purpose of the present discussion, however, this last point must be put out of our minds, since apart from Troeltsch no other European thinker than Eucken seems to have approached our topic with the same grasp of its wide significance. His treatment of it is in my judgment the less convincing, since it is less definite and takes less account of the evidence of history, dealing rather in generalizations.

Eucken is much more cautious in his acceptance of personalism. His temperament leans sympathetically towards Pantheism: he prefers the expression Godhead to that of God, and reiterates throughout his writings the phrase "The Spiritual Life." I cannot help feeling that he is trying to combine two attitudes which are really irreconcilable. In an earlier chapter we saw that while religion, as Dr. M'Taggart truly says, is a state of mind (he calls

it an emotion, in which I am not sure that we can agree with him) resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large, the fundamental difference between Christianity and Pantheism is that the former regards such a harmony as a communion or relationship essentially personal: the latter does not necessarily do so. Eucken is at great pains to retain what he calls the eternal in Christianity, but his conception of the eternal nucleus is that "the spiritual life" is not a manifestation of mere man, but of an independent reality, through communication with which man gains a new and cosmic nature. To Eucken the union of the human and the divine constitutes the nucleus of all genuine religion, and he holds Christianity to be final because he believes that it has pursued this problem of union to its final depths, and not only effects particular relations of the divine and the human, but presents a full union of the two natures, and has courageously maintained the indestructibility of the divine in the midst of all the perversions of the human situation. It is final because it makes the Kingdom of God its central idea and promises not only to help the individual in a "given" world but to guide him to a new world. This is a different selection of fundamentals from that of Harnack; but it is just as little dependent upon the historical career, as such, of Jesus of Nazareth. Any group of individuals corporately meditating upon the suggestive discourses of some finite teacher might conceivably arrive at the "eternal in Christianity," described in this way.

We are reminded by Mr. Clutton Brock that the Kingdom of God was an essential part of the preaching of Christ. Mr. Brock has apparently no interest in the Jewish connotation of the phrase "kingdom of God," but treats our Lord as the great Master of the art of living, Whose genius affirmed the absolute elements in the universe which the ordinary individual in his best moments (however feebly) affirms; elements that produce when they are respected by the individual, that harmony between the individual and the universe which is the essence and equivalent of eternal life. This is really Eucken's view, only Mr. Brock still has an interest, one might almost say an evangelical interest, in the personal career of our Lord. In the whole of Eucken's enormous book, *The Truth of Religion*, there are not five lines anywhere which show respect for the historical narrative of the Gospels. Eucken's championship of the spiritual life as the solution of the most urgent problems of humanity deserves our gratitude; but his attempt to save Christianity by whelming it in a vague mysticism only ends in undue concessions to the purely mystical temperament, and this is certain, as Troeltsch recognizes in his *Future Possibilities of Christianity*, to prove an ultimate failure.

Eucken, in 1911, published a small book called *Can we still be Christians?* Under this candid title he puts in a small compass what he has already given under a slightly different form and on a larger scale in his monumental work, *The Truth of Religion*. He begins by facing very boldly the passionate

movement of protest against Christianity which he says is growing in intensity and carrying all before it, and which is no tame and timid doubt, but an antagonism much deeper and vastly more dangerous, which lays hold on large masses of people, plunging them now into dull indifference, now into a passion of iconoclastic hate. In view of the events, 1914 to 1920, it seems worth while to quote him a little more in detail:—"Figures prove conclusively that the interest in church services and observances is constantly decreasing and that the faithful are rapidly becoming a minority. In our great cities—in Germany, at least—every attack or even aspersion on Christianity meets with rapturous applause. Is such treatment of religion—the religion we ourselves profess—a natural and normal occurrence, and can we find any parallel to it outside of Christianity?"

"Unbelief, moreover, is no longer directed merely to particular features and aspects of Christian thought. It has extended over the whole area, so that Christianity itself is called in question and not merely certain of its dogmas and institutions. Further, this unbelief, abandoning its old defensive attitude, has become more and more aggressive in character. It marshals its several forces in close array and moves them forward together in battle-line. It is not content with being merely tolerated: it longs to rule. It organizes its adherents and confronts Christianity with big constructive programmes."

This book appeared in an English translation in 1914 and is a sad commentary upon the tale of the

war years, while the words we have just quoted are a very serious lesson to English Christians.

Eucken holds Christianity to consist of six essential points.

1. It is theocentric, and makes religion "the sovereign mistress of man's life and destiny, . . . not the embroidery of a life whose substance is already given."

2. It is a religion of the spirit more absolutely than any other religion.

3. It is a religion of redemption, not a religion of law.

4. The redemption it promises is ethical, not intellectual.

5. The attainment of harmony between God and man is achieved according to Christianity by the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus, which has inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth and made it possible for men to become in fact, what they already are potentially and in theory, sons of God.

6. This Christian dispensation is regarded as purely a gift from God to man. To treasure and dispense this gift is the function of the Christian Church, and it must be admitted that although its chief work has been to create an inward world formed out of the relationship of spirit to spirit, by the incontrovertible testimony of history it has altered vitally the whole condition of the human race.

The resistance to Christianity follows along six lines :—

1. Resistance to the claim of the Church to dominate human life.

2. Resistance to the traditional doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement, and finally to the exclusive Divinity of Christ.

3. Resistance to the world of thought of a definitely Christian temper which has tried to maintain itself as distinct from historical fact, and especially resistance to the morality associated with that world of thought.

4. Resistance to the idea of redemption as unnecessary.

5. Resistance to inward spiritual life.

6. Resistance to other-worldliness, and the creation of a religion of this world.

What reasons are there for refusing to reject Christianity? It is evident that the resistance is one which involves not only Christianity, but the whole of spiritual religion. Saint Augustine said that Christ came to free the world from the world. The world to-day does not seem anxious to be freed from itself. This fact is undeniable, but it does not follow that naturalistic culture is, or ought to be, triumphant. Further the modern world sets a very high valuation upon human strength and greatness, which were apt to be depreciated by Christian thought, not only in early days but also even by the reformers. This valuation is only reaching its maximum to-day in the attempts to unite mankind by organization of an international sort, not only to struggle with environment but to prevent the exploitation of the many by the few.

It sounds most impressive; yet the net result proves to be disappointing. The humanistic culture, so far from succumbing to outside attack has supplied its own convincing refutation. In man as mere man there begins to be seen pettiness rather than greatness. A further argument in favour of the spiritual interpretation of the universe is the impossibility which man finds of contenting himself with entire absorption in his material environment. Ordinary work does not fill the whole of life. It is, therefore, prudent to refrain from rejecting a system which claims to provide an adequate answer to the riddle of existence until we have found something better to take its place, since the supposition that, interpreted by naturalistic canons, life was no riddle proves to be without foundation.

Eucken builds up from this point onward. He insists that the dawn of spiritual consciousness is a real upward step in human development, and he draws attention to its universality. In order to protect this new and subtle development it was natural that there should be formed fellowships or churches, and if these do not to-day meet the needs of their members this should urge us to renew them rather than to discard them.

Eucken finally comes to the central point, namely, the claims of Christianity to be the answer above all others to the yearnings of the newly-awakened spiritual humanity.

1. Its absolute demand for Divine supremacy is essential, since pantheism by itself simply makes God lose Himself in the world.

2. It is par excellence the religion of a spiritual supra-mundane life. It recognizes that the spirit of man is too big for this world.

3. Even in the idea of redemption lies an abiding and necessary truth. Grace is a reality. The best work is never the work of the mere isolated human individual, but is the result of the Divine living presence of a higher power poured into him, sustaining and guiding him.

4. Christianity, more than any other religion, has lifted morality to a position of supreme power in the universe. It has made moral problems the very centre of the world's happenings, and has invested them with tremendous seriousness.

5. Eucken meets his chief difficulty in facing, as we shall see elsewhere, the historical basis of Christianity, since it is plain that he feels considerable doubt about it himself. It seems as though the historical basis for him is merely reduced to the well-authenticated career of a great creative human personality, round whose biography centres an interest which no smaller personalities can attract.

6. Eucken considers that the Christian church depends for its existence upon the five preceding points, since a religious community has no *raison d'être* unless it really possess one all-embracing truth which is indispensable to man's existence.

The answer which Eucken gives then to the question which heads his enquiry is:—"We not only can but must be Christians,—only, however, on the one condition that Christianity be recognized as a progressive historic movement still in the making, that

it be shaken free from the numbing influence of ecclesiasticism and placed upon a broader foundation." It remains to state what changes Eucken desires to see.

1. Religion must enter into a closer touch with human activity, and at the same time

2. Religion must become a more powerful leaven in the world so that the spiritual life is more independent of man's character and condition.

3. Christianity must be treated as a continuous work in which all have a share ; its disciples must not merely passively accept it, but themselves help in its upbuilding.

The weakness of these suggestions lies in their vagueness, since Eucken in his heart of hearts has discarded historical Christianity, which he says owes its importance solely to the fact that it made the eternal Christianity appear for the first time upon the plane of history and become a power in the world. It does not seem possible to make this distinction between the historical and the eternal. With the statement that Christianity is greater than its present ecclesiastical forms, few unprejudiced persons will disagree ; and the indispensability of a new Christianity, full of greater life and liberty, is to-day a commonplace : but in his smaller as much as in his larger treatise Eucken suffers from his undue preoccupation with mysticism and his apparent disregard for the sequence of historical events as a divine reality. It is in consequence hard to believe that the vague and shadowy entity to which he reduces the essence of Christianity can provide the substance for such a renewal.

APPENDIX I

It will naturally be expected that something should be said about modern Theosophy. There are four strands in the latter, and we will first try to unwind and expose them.

A. *The unsettlement with regard to the finality of Christianity, which has given rise to this book.* Theosophy is in one aspect the amateur side of comparative religion. It is the attempt of untrained minds to construct an all-inclusive religious philosophy. That the results should not be pleasing to orthodox Christians is not necessarily the fault of the constructors since the neglect of any popular scientific teaching by the Church on the subject of non-Christian religion has naturally left people to fend for themselves. They can hardly be blamed for making mistakes. No attempt until recently has been made to place the comparative study of religions among the compulsory subjects in the training for the ministry of the Church of England and there are probably few schoolmasters or mistresses who, in giving "divinity teaching," are able to throw light upon the text of the Bible from their knowledge of the now very considerable literature dealing with comparative religion, anthropology, and the religions of the East. People who travel, who mix with students of other nationalities, or who spend some time in service abroad, whether in the army, civil service, or commerce, are left to form their own conclusions, to make their own amateur generalizations, and to influence other people.

B. *The periodical influence of Eastern religious thought over the West.* Oriental views of the universe have tended to invade the Western world with regular frequency. It is enough to mention the influx of Asiatic religious ideas into classical Greece, the invasion of the later Roman Empire by oriental mystery cults, the views of matter involved in medieval asceticism, the medieval heresies of the Cathars and Bogomils, and the peculiar cabalistic teachings of some of the post-reformation mystics such as Boehme, Swedenborg, etc.

C. *The combination of a superficial craving for novelty with the relentless questioning and challenging of all long*

established institutions (the latter the product of war-time thought.)

D. *The continued prevalence of superstition, especially among women.* Superstition in the artisan classes is rarely of an imported kind ; but the rise of a new upper middle class as well as of a new lower middle class, both of them owing their position to industrial prosperity, if not to the amassing of private fortunes in war time, has produced the problem of a considerable number of half-educated people, able to buy books and pay for lectures, anxious to become patrons of the latest sensation, extremely vulnerable to flattery, and quite unable to detect fallacies in anything that they may happen to read or hear. Further, the intellectual set-back which inevitably accompanies a war, together with the feeling of helplessness produced by serious danger, has very naturally led to an increase in the practice of magic and the occult arts, since the love of the mysterious is a weakness never very far below the surface in human nature, and where the apportionment of life and death seems to the superficial observer so irrational, it is difficult to refrain from a course of thought or action about which there is the sporting chance that it may just turn the scale in your favour. What wonder that a variety of fancy-religions has in recent times sprung up ?

It may be replied that the foregoing remarks are unduly unsympathetic towards a group of religious movements which at any rate are anti-materialistic. Ardent Theosophists will argue that official Christianity especially in the Latin and Eastern Churches countenances much that might equally with justice be called superstitious. This is unhappily the case ; but it is an argument against superstition, not against Christianity. In the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth there is no toleration of the superstitious or the irrational. Devotion to truth at all costs is an essential part of His programme. I can well believe that there are some few educated Theosophists who smile at the vagaries of their brethren, and are really conscientious believers in the ultimate possibility of reconciling all religions in one common term, which shall include both Judæo-Christian personalism and Oriental pantheism. But such a belief is based on an insufficient appreciation of

the facts. Opposites cannot here be united. It is not a case of two irreconcilables being reconciled within some higher truth. It is scientifically a contest between two views of life, in which the one or the other *must* prevail. Oriental pantheism might come to terms with the Christianity of Eucken, just as Hinduism has come to terms with many religious movements in the past, and with an easy tolerance that is cynically careless of truth has folded them one after another in its ample embrace. The peculiar genius of Christianity however is its appreciation of mysticism and universalism without the slighting of historical fact. Dissever this appreciation, and you destroy Christianity. It cannot come to terms with any other faith without destroying itself. It is a wholly unscientific judgment which supposes that because there are several answers to the religious problem they must all be right. The right answer may prove to be one which excludes the other. It may be a skilful combination of some or all of the answers. But it is not arrived at necessarily by their arithmetical total. There must be balance, judgment, and critical detachment, as well as a proper background of mental training and general knowledge : and it is just this that Theosophists have failed to display.

A study of the recognized text-books of Theosophy will substantiate these allegations, and I think it is worth while to spend a little time over the evidence.

1. Let anyone read Mrs. Annie Besant's *Esoteric Christianity* or her small handbook of Theosophy, and he will find therein a curious medley of undigested facts about Biblical and dogmatic criticism and some genuine appreciation of spiritual difficulties as they occur to earnest and devout minds to-day, and then, as the solution for them—he will find propounded explanatory details regarding the Person of Our Lord given to the world by Madame Blavatsky and other experts in occult investigation.

What value is to be set upon Madame Blavatsky and her compeers may be gathered from Miss E. R. M'Neile's chapter on "Theosophic evidences" in her book *Through Theosophy to Christian Faith* (p. 38). "Madame Blavatsky . . . destroyed evidence, made deplorably false statements, and was ultimately convicted of deliberate and consistent

fraud." Yet she is still one of Mrs. Besant's "experts in occult investigation."

Miss M'Neile went out to India as a student of Theosophy who was ready to submit herself to the guidance of its experts. She has therefore first-hand information as to its tenets; and it is a matter of great interest that she should have abandoned it for Anglo-Catholic Christianity. Her evidence may be summarized as follows:

i. Mrs. Besant's own particular belief in the cult of the young Krishnamarti as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ is not binding upon individual Theosophists, so that it appears she has failed to convince her followers on what one would have thought was a vital point.

ii. Theosophy represents virtually the same system as that of the early Gnostics, and is both open to the same objections and also likely to share the same fate as its predecessor.

iii. Theosophy, though claiming to study religions comparatively, has made no contribution whatever to our knowledge of the faiths of the Orient. It has not discovered a single fresh fact, nor brought a single fresh text to the notice of scholars, nor produced a single notable translation or commentary. . . . The bulk of the work done . . . is unscientific and seriously misleading.¹ Theosophists indeed are hopelessly obscurantist.

iv. The claim of Theosophists to direct perception in matters of natural science is not substantiated. The attitude of Theosophists towards physical science is commonly one of indifference and contempt, and no proper verification of Theosophical assertions is permitted to outsiders, which renders unbiassed testing impossible.

v. Mme. Blavatsky's evidence is hopelessly fraudulent.

vi. Theosophy outside India is camouflaged, and pretends to promote universal brotherhood. In India it is a sect of Hinduism, and as such it tolerates caste and idolatry, though it admittedly tries to improve the condition of women.

vii. Its *authority* depends not on historical facts or on the common consciousness of mankind, but on the perception of certain vibrations in the universe by Adepts.

¹ See Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 288.

Who are the principal Adepts? Mrs. Besant, who is not accepted by the sect called "the Quest" nor by the majority of the German Theosophists, and Mr. Leadbeater, who was expelled from the society for immoral teaching and practices, and then without any recantation restored to it by Mrs. Besant both as a member and as an official. The authority of these exceptional individuals has to be blindly accepted by the disciple of Theosophy, even when it involves such nonsense as the birth of Christ in 105 B.C. and the unhistorical character of the reference in the Gospels to Pontius Pilate. This utter submission of the intellect leads eventually to an almost complete loss of mental freedom and activity.

2. The text-book *The Ocean of Theosophy*, by William G. Judge, is in the main an exposition of ideas oriental both in name and substance, such as Kama Rupa, Manas, Reincarnation, Karma, Kama Loka, Devachan. The reader is referred frequently to Mr. A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*. It is plainly a confused attempt to combine Judaeo-Christian personalism with Buddhistic Orientalism. Consistent Theosophy is indeed orientalism in a missionary dress, and its apparent friendliness towards Christianity is simply an insincere accommodation to Western prejudices.

The attractiveness of Theosophy to the Western world shows itself in four features which undoubtedly appear in its literature and spoken propaganda.

A. Genuine mystical piety and spirituality, not in the least in advance of the best Christianity as displayed in its mystical literature and in the lives of its saints both past and present, distinctly in advance, however, of the commercialised Christianity which has unduly associated the spread of spiritual religion with the accumulation of large funds, and in the year 1825 recommended the evangelization of India as the best way of insuring the hold of Great Britain upon that country.

B. Emphasis upon love and fellowship. This is not in advance of Christian principle, nor even of the best teaching of the Hebrew prophets, but as Miss Dougall¹ has

¹ In "Immortality," essays edited by Canon Streeter.

pointed out it is greatly in advance of the bulk of Old Testament righteousness, which was and is constantly taught in our Sunday schools and churches under the name of Christianity. Thus we find the first object of the Theosophical Society described as: "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour." "To the Theosophist all life becomes sacred. . . .

' Kill not for pity's sake, and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way,'

was said by the Buddha many centuries ago. The true Theosophist is humanitarian at heart. . . ."

The value of the fellowship attained by lonely souls amid communities of Theosophists is a plausible argument in its favour, but as a matter of fact the force of it lies in the circumstance that fellowship in religion confers certain benefits upon those who partake of it, irrespective of the truth or falsehood of the religion. It would seem as though the fundamental fact that the essence of religion is personal relationship between man and God had made it inevitable that all partnerships entered upon by human beings for religious purposes, though based upon unsound intellectual assumptions, superstition, or even downright falsehood, should retain that element of value which attaches to natural relationships. The varieties of pagan marriage have doubtless very little in common with Christian marriage at its highest and best, yet one suspects that because the relation between husband and wife is a natural one, there can be no pagan wedlock, however degraded, which does not show at least traces of that fellowship of souls which attains its perfection in a ripe example of Christian holy matrimony. So with religion. The fellowship of the pagan mysteries is reproduced in a form a hundred times richer in the fellowship of the Christian mysteries. Cults which have developed in close proximity to the Catholic Church may reasonably be expected to reflect some of its spirit in their institutions, and their fellowships will probably show more vitality than is displayed by the chilly and inert masses of nominal and conventional adherents who, in not a few cases, gloomily haunt some of the long-established shrines of the Christian.

faith. It is not long, however, since the ladies who are now loud in their praises of the "Higher Thought centre," or the "Occult circle," were equally enthusiastic over the guilds and sodalities of some ultra-ritualistic High Anglican parish. They were not seeking truth so much as fashionable novelty.

The claim of fellowship does not then involve the truth either of Theosophy or of Christian Science. It only proves that they are spiritual movements, and that even an imperfect or one-sided movement can exhibit the spirit of fellowship better than a movement with a sounder basis which has grown stale.

C. The apparent explanation of a good many obvious problems and inconsistencies which Protestant Christianity has inadequately dealt with, such as the immense moral and spiritual inequalities between individuals, the plurality of worlds, and the existence of the great Eastern religions, difficulties which are in part older than Christianity itself.

D. The serenity and helpfulness acquired by a discipline of concentration and contemplation, which is much higher than that current among average Western Christians, though not nearly so high as that current among the Christian saints, because it is there coupled with a divine discontent at social evils. Oriental serenity has never lifted the burden of suffering in India. We read, however, "Theosophy gives the teaching whereby thought-power may be strengthened and controlled, the emotions may be purified and ennobled and the maximum of physical well-being, dependent upon pure food, pure drink, and a serene stable temperament may be attained."

It is difficult to regard the Theosophical writers as serious scholars. Mr. Judge, for example, expects us to believe, on the authority of the "adepts," that the age of humanity is eighteen million years and a little over and that "The burning question of the anthropoid apes as related to man is settled by the Masters of Wisdom, who say that instead of those being our progenitors they were produced by man himself. In one of the early periods of the globe the men of that time begot from large females of the animal kingdom the anthropoids, and in anthropoid bodies were caught a certain number of Egos destined one day to be men. The

remainder of the descendants of the true anthropoid are the descendants of those illegitimate children of men, and will die away gradually, their Egos entering human bodies. Those half-ape and half-man bodies could not be ensouled by strictly animal Egos, and for that reason they are known to the Secret Doctrine as the 'Delayed Race,' the only one not included in the fiat of nature that no more Egos from the lower kingdoms will come into the human kingdom until the next Manvantara." The obvious objection to this precious rubbish is that men cannot copulate animals, and that therefore no men in the early periods of the globe could have caused large female animals to conceive hybrids. Other interesting information furnished by the "Masters of Wisdom" is that neither the bee nor the wheat could have had their original differentiation in this chain of globes, but must have been produced and finished in some other sphere from which they were brought over into our own. "Why this should be so," warily adds Mr. Judge, "I am willing to leave for the present to conjecture."

3. Both Mr. Judge and Mr. G. H. Whyte ("Is Theosophy anti-Christian") are unscientific in their Biblical exegesis. Their appeal to Matt. xi. and xvii. as a proof of Our Lord's belief in reincarnation is a fair example. "The return of Elijah" is regarded as equivalent to his re-birth in the person of John the Baptist. Is there, however, more than the slightest resemblance? John the Baptist never spoke of himself as the reincarnation of Elijah. It is indeed almost certain that "the coming of Elijah before the great and terrible One" is not prose but poetry, and means no more than the further phrase, "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up for you, *like unto me*." This is the interpretation which finds a place in our hymn

". . . . the *new* Elias comes."

The question may well be asked: "Was there ever any other serious interpretation among the Jews?"

Mr. Judge quotes Proverbs viii. 22 to prove the pre-existence of King Solomon. Whatever may be allowed to speculation concerning Solomon's presence "when the earth was made," Prov. viii. 22 cannot possibly establish

it, since it is taken from a piece of Khokmah literature dating from centuries after Solomon's day, and is part of a speech put into the mouth of "Wisdom" personified.¹ No careful student could possibly have made such a wild misuse of it as Mr. Judge.

4. Mr. Whyte's treatise may be taken by itself. He solemnly announces that "reincarnation . . . is the companion doctrine to evolution," and adds to the Christian evidences of its acceptance by Our Lord the passage in John 9²—the man born blind. The suppression of Our Lord's answer in which the reference of the disciples to Karma is deliberately swept aside, hardly suggests intellectual honesty. On p. 20 occurs the passage, "Pre-existence and re-birth are referred to by many of the Christian Fathers, and were cardinal doctrines among the Gnostics, who represented for several centuries the purer stream of the spiritual and philosophical teaching of the Christ. Witness the Pistis Sophia on this point." It is difficult to believe that anyone who had read the Fathers and was familiar with their persistent combating of Gnostic doctrines could write in this way unless he was out to mislead. The passage quoted from Dr. M'Taggart on the next page does not in itself establish the doctrine of re-birth in this life, but only Dr. M'Taggart's acceptance of the probability of pre-existence of souls *before* birth, and of a series of states of existence beyond this present incarnate and earthly existence. Belief in such a future series is not excluded from the Christian faith, but its precise form is not *de fide*.

It is noticeable that the teachers of Theosophy in presenting their case to Westerns studiously avoid all reference to reincarnation in animals, and say very little about re-birth upon this planet. This is inconsistent, as a thoroughgoing acceptance of Karma and Reincarnation is bound to include both these possibilities. I do not think that teachers of Theosophy have ever succeeded in refuting Miss Dougall's nine points,² except perhaps the second.

¹ Curiously enough the verse in question is a famous one in Christological controversies.

² "Immortality," prev. quoted.

i. That if reincarnation on this earth be a fact it is remarkable what a lack of continuity exists between the various states of the soul. Such a discontinuous life would seem hardly worth accepting as personal immortality, and indeed continuance of memory is necessary to personality.

ii. Reincarnation on this earth is unnecessarily geocentric.

iii. Reincarnation makes the soul's progress non-social.

iv. Reincarnation is bound up with the philosophy of returning cycles, and of this latter modern science shows us no shadow of proof or even presumption.

v. Reincarnation makes the purity of childhood a gigantic lie. The most innocent child may really be "an aged pilgrim soul, scarred and seamed by evil experience, only innocent in the sense in which the senile are innocent when memory entirely fails."

vi. The justice of Karma does not necessarily do away with the injury that a sin has done to others.

vii. The justice of Karma does not necessarily regenerate a soul.

viii. The justice of Karma does not as far as can be seen make "the punishment fit the crime." Suffering is often out of all proportion to the gravity of the sin, and the greatest sinners sometimes suffer least.

ix. The justice of Karma, though an advance upon the idea of capriciously inflicted suffering, is not true justice, since it is vindictive.

I have said that Theosophy is in effect an amateur effort at a comparative theory of religion. This, as we have seen, is definitely denied by Theosophists, who say that so far from being theory it is fact, and that in its teachings are embodied the experiences and discoveries of a certain number of highly developed persons called Adepts, who have trained themselves to be sensitive to vibrations of a subtler nature than those perceived by the ordinary human being. The result of this sensitiveness is to provide a new short cut to reality. The Adept in fact is able to furnish an authoritative revelation, and we are told that such teachings can be verified by investigation and experiment on the part of those who are willing to take the

trouble to qualify themselves for such enquiry. It will be observed that this claim is the same as that put forward by spiritualistic mediums. Apart from all questions of fraud, it is as certain as anything can be that no such absolute knowledge exists, although we may readily admit that what is called the mystical experience of God is an experience of reality which to some extent resembles it, and that clairvoyance and telepathy are undoubtedly means by which existing facts may be discovered within the range of this world of our experience, while one would not for a moment deny the mysterious evidence of thought-transference. But the visions of the great mystics are entirely free from the irrationality, the slipshod carelessness, and the pettiness which characterize the pretentious revelations of the so-called Adepts.

Thus we are told by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater (*An Outline of Theosophy*) that Theosophy is an intelligent theory of the universe. But what intelligence can there be in such a theory, when, as he tells us in the preceding paragraph it presents the moral teaching of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Christianity, as identical? Loose and sweeping statements of this kind, which even the proverbial schoolboy of Macaulay can see to be inaccurate, discredit this writer as far as any claim to serious scholarship is concerned. Even persons who dislike Christian morals would not regard them as *identical* with those taught by Mohammed or Moses, while the essence of Buddhism as we have already seen is quite a different thing from the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

It is not necessary to allege fraud against all the claims of the Theosophists, such for example as those of Mrs. Annie Besant, since many men of undoubted good faith have declared that they have had such experiences as "being caught up into the third Heaven," or "going out into the astral plane," and the only point of importance is that we should study scientifically the nature of the mental states in which such experience occurs. This experience seems to belong to the phenomena of hypnoidal states. "Nearly all religions¹ have shown instances of attempts to

¹ This and the next two quotations are from Miss Dougall's Essay in "Immortality."

reach freedom of the spirit and enlightenment by inducing a semi-hypnotic condition. The earlier stages of this hypnosis are simply a natural and wholesome quiescence of the mind, and it should be understood that this state is no more spiritual than the state of ordinary activity, although it has the advantage of allowing the mind fuller play, so that in such moments it is remarkably open to suggestion and thought-transference, and capable of feats of clairvoyance. In such a condition a spiritual expert may easily perceive a truth, but on the other hand it is probable that in the two succeeding stages of hypnosis, that of the indifference or cessation of actual attention to any subject or suggestion, and the hypnotic sleep which follows this stage, the individual may suffer from hallucinations and delusions, ending finally in hypnotic dreams, based upon desires or interests which are present strongly to the mind. On awaking the memory of these appears as that of a supernatural revelation and so is invested with a false glamour and sanctity. It is agreed that the general tenour of the content of the mind in any self-induced hypnoidal state is determined by the real, though not always conscious trend of the desire and purpose of the self, and it is also admitted that the telepathic influences from other minds to which it is most susceptible are thoughts or pictures which harmonize with its own real desire and purpose. It follows from this that the value of the visions which occur in such states is readily open to criticism. It is also admitted that the practice of hypnoidal states, so far from leading to the acquirement of truth, actually renders the individual incapable of appreciating it, while it never makes any really original or valuable contribution to knowledge of spiritual things. It seems clear then that the hypnoidal states of Theosophical Adepts or Spiritualistic mediums, or indeed of any other persons however good and sincere are *in themselves* negative evidence of what they seek to prove. It may be that their content does reveal some objective reality, but it cannot do so unless the rational waking life of the subject exhibits an endeavour after such reality, and in all cases the visions must be rationally criticised." . . . "We have three ways of approaching truth—knowledge of fact, current and historic, the experience of the

self or of others; hard thinking; and the intuitive vision of quiescent moments. Truth arrived at by hypnoidal states must not contradict knowledge attained in these other ways."

"In those communities where trance is most prized and encouraged, there has been for centuries the least contribution to the world's thought and the least improvement in its manners and customs. The spectacular or verbal content of the trance state arises from the subject's own mentality, and the visions seen or words heard cannot be accepted as a source of accurate information about the unseen world." With these three quotations we may I think leave the Adepts of Theosophy to themselves.

Those who deplore the progress of Theosophy as a religious synthesis would do well to spare their energies for constructive work. Four things are needed:

1. An adventurous abandonment of the petty outlook which infects official Christianity with boredom and timidity.

2. Better intellectual training in the comparative study of religions on the part of those who have to teach.

3. A more joyous acceptance of the Pauline maxim, "All things are yours," making it possible to show in particular instances by quotation and reference, what has been long taught in general, *i.e.* that Christianity is the crown of all religions and is ready to endorse whatever is good or beautiful or true wherever in the world it may be found.

4. Recognition of the serious dangers accompanying over-organization or over-intellectualization in the religious sphere.

APPENDIX II

Although it is hardly a serious reconstruction of an absolute religion, the attempt at a restatement of the origins of Christianity which occurs at the end of the first volume of Mr. H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* cannot fairly be ignored. I believe it to be sincere and I imagine that it will be widely read and therefore accepted by a great many people who take their ideas second-hand, as well as by

many of the intelligentsia who, whatever their general interest in religious and historical problems may be, are not specialists in the history of religion.

We will take then the thirtieth chapter of Mr. Wells' book and examine it section by section. Mr. Wells quite rightly begins with the Jewish background, but he forfeits our confidence in his study of the original authorities by saying :—"The Jews looked for a special Saviour, . . . who was to redeem mankind by the agreeable process of restoring the fabulous glories of David and Solomon, and bringing the whole world at last under the benevolent but firm Jewish heel." Many of the Jews no doubt did believe this, but the reader need only turn to the catena of passages displayed in chapter three of this book in order to see what varied heights and depths were contained in the Messianic hope. Whatever it was at its worst, no one can deny that at its very best it was something far greater than this intense nationalism.

Mr Wells runs considerable risk in referring his readers to the *Encyclopædia Biblica* for the details of New Testament criticism. A good deal of research has taken place since that remarkable work first saw the light, and it would have been wiser to quote a more recent authority. With the discarding of the conventional portrait of Jesus there is no need to quarrel; but it is a grave mistake to gloss over the evidences of His strength. The Jesus of Mr. Wells is "lean and strenuous." Why not do justice as well to the equally important factors of His reposefulness and majesty, of His keen eyes and abundant and healthful vitality, from which virtue went out? His swift death is no real evidence of physical weakness, since the malefactors were ordinary criminals who until the moment of crucifixion had presumably been kept in prison. They were guilty of no political offence and as being of the same class as their gaolers probably did not suffer any previous torture but may even like men condemned in more recent times, have been allowed additional comforts before execution. Our Lord, on the contrary, had been conscious for many days of an approaching mental and spiritual as well as physical crisis, and His whole Personality must have been strung up to a superlative degree of tension. Add to this

that He had been arrested in the middle of the night after the memorable scenes in the upper room, followed by a period of sleepless prayer in Gethsemane, that He was then dragged from law court to law court, examined and cross-examined, mobbed and struck by guards and attendants, aware that the very associates who had eaten and drunk of the sacramental meal a few hours before had fled and left Him in the lurch and that two apparently had turned traitor, and finally that He had been subjected to the full brutality of a Roman scourging. Such tortures were surely enough to exhaust the vitality of even a strong man ; and it must be remembered further that our Lord was probably kept the whole time without food, and that He deliberately deprived Himself of the benefit of the bowl of wine offered to Him on Calvary lest the drug which it contained should deaden His senses.

On page 358 it is stated as a matter of fact that, " In the Gospels all that body of theological assertion which constitutes Christianity finds little support. There is, as the reader may see for himself, no clear and emphatic assertion in these books of the doctrines which Christian teachers of all denominations find generally necessary to salvation. It is difficult to get any words that actually came from Jesus in which He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah (rendered in Greek by ' the Christ ') or to be a part of the Godhead, or in which He explained the doctrine of the Atonement or urged any sacrifices or sacraments (that is to say, priestly offices) upon His followers. We shall see presently how later on all Christendom was torn by disputes about the Trinity. There is no evidence that the apostles of Jesus ever heard of the Trinity—at any rate from Him. The observance of the Jewish Sabbath, again, transferred to the Mithraic Sun-day is an important feature of many Christian cults ; but Jesus deliberately broke the Sabbath, and said that it was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Nor did He say a word about the worship of His mother Mary, in the guise of Isis, the Queen of Heaven."

All this is very loose. In the first place the Gospels are in some respects extremely theological. Taken uncritically they have provided with perfect ease a great deal of traditional theology. The Virgin birth, the ransoming

death, the resurrection, the ascension, the power of binding and loosing, the promise of the return, the Messiahship of Jesus, and His designation as Son of God, as pre-existent, and as Lord, are all to be found in one or other of the four Gospels "as the reader may see for himself." To eliminate any of this theology it is necessary to apply literary and historical criticism to the documents themselves. It may be argued that it is right to do so, and that the elimination is justifiable, but this is not the same as saying that the theology was not there in the beginning. Further, with regard to our Lord's claim to be Messiah or part of the Godhead, Mr. Wells seems to contradict his previous statement by saying on page 369, "Jesus called Himself the Son of God and also the Son of Man." Now it is generally admitted that the evidence of our Lord having called Himself the Son of God is less well attested than the evidence of His having taken the title, Son of Man. But with regard to the latter Mr. Wells is indeed right; and he does not seem to realize that this phrase involves the whole of Our Lord's acceptance of the Jewish Messiahship, as well as His pre-existence.

Mr. Wells confuses fair deduction, exemplified in the case of Trinitarian theology (which is after all only the codification of experience), with syncretism as exemplified in the cult of the Virgin, while his remark about the observance of the Jewish Sabbath overlooks the fact that until the rise of Old Testamentarian Puritanism, the Christian Sunday had nothing in common with it, nor has it in Catholic circles at this very day.

It is a relief to leave such a paragraph as the above, and to come to those which describe Our Lord's teaching on the subject of the Kingdom of Heaven. Here the ground is safer, and it is encouraging to find Mr. Wells admitting that Our Lord was too great for His disciples to grasp the full meaning of His acts and teaching, and that to this day He is too much for our small hearts! There is much in this section which can excite our sympathy and win our hearty approval.

The next paragraph (§ 3) is not so good. It shows Mr. Wells falling into the old trap of supposing that the great universal religions had an identical basis and that their

disciples might have been easily interchangeable. This common error has been dealt with elsewhere. Here it need only be said that the one constant factor which the great religions share is universalism itself. Belief in the Divine Logos makes it easy to credit many of the great moral and spiritual teachers with sporadic perceptions of Absolute Truth. But Jesus was not a Teacher. He was a Personality, and, a Career, and to this day He stands isolated and unique as the Life-Giver, the Life-Bringer. It may be neater to some minds to suppose an essential identity between Christianity, Buddhism and Islam beyond their common universalism, but the documentary facts are against the theory however neat. Contrast and antithesis remain, and must be admitted. The odds are on the side of the Historical Absoluteness of Jesus, whatever the ultimate terms in which it is stated. It is of no use to say that one of the great religions will not overcome the others, since that process is actually taking place. The real question is that which forms the title of this book. Answer it in the affirmative and the ultimate issue is certain and Christian. Answer it doubtfully, and the future lies not with Islam or Buddhism, but with something which is as yet in the womb of the future.

Passing to § 4 we may well ask what grounds Mr. Wells has for asserting that Jesus probably visited Jerusalem for the first time on the occasion of His Passion, and when he comes to tell of the Resurrection faith, and in the next section (§ 5) of the basis of the Pauline experience, the most cautious of liberal critics must feel that his language is totally inadequate.

The conversion of Simon Bar-Jona the coward into Peter the bold man of rock-like faith, the complete change of outlook and objective in the life of Saul the Pharisee—these are not the work of "hearsay," "dreams," and "consoling convictions." Mr. Wells is in the old, old difficulty of having to build the structure of the great Christian confraternity of believers upon a euclidian point. As a historian he would have done better to leave the mystery unexplained, and insist on the wonderful change as fact.

The remainder of chapter xxx. concerns our enquiry less, except the remarks which occur here and there in the

course of it about the influence of the mystery cults upon Christianity. Mr. Wells is in this case an indiscriminating Protestant. He confuses the use of sacraments with the *ex opere operato* theory of their working, and will have nothing to do with either on any account. The whole of syncretism is to him intrusion. He has apparently no intimate knowledge of any mediating system of belief and practice which can steer between the extremes of rationalism and superstition and which has proved the stay and inspiration of many of our best saints and heroes and the comfort of many struggling seekers. It is to be hoped he may discover it some day. In the mean season I am afraid we must set down his account of the rise of Christianity and its relation to other religions as less successful than might have been hoped,¹ though in the history of his own religious opinions it is a stage of no small importance.

¹ Mr. Wells has I believe modified some of his statements in his second edition, and the modesty with which he apologises for having acted as a pioneer in undertaking so ambitious a work renders criticism less unpleasant. I hope he will recognise that this section is composed in no uncharitable spirit. I confess to having read his splendid work with the greatest interest, and in many places with admiration.

CHAPTER VIII

SYNTHESIS

THE point has now been reached at which I must try to put together as far as I can a summary of the argument. It will also be expected no doubt that I should furnish some positive confession of faith.

We set out to enquire in what sense, if in any, the reading of life commonly called the Christian religion, could be held to deserve the epithet "absolute." It was first of all necessary to investigate the meaning of religion, and to consider the likelihood of its continuing to exist in any recognizable form. This led at once to an encounter with those who define religion as an emotion based upon the consciousness of some harmony existing between the individual and the universe, but who deny that it involves any relationship with a *personal* deity.

This contention detained us a little, and it was pointed out in reply, (1) that life on the planet is made up of relationships which may fitly be described in an ascending scale as increasingly personal, (2) that in consequence, to leave out the relationship

to a super-personal deity was to destroy the complete symmetry of life as we know it, and to ignore the logical conclusion of an undeniable tendency, (3) that seeing that the emotion produced by the harmony is admitted as being perceived by a person, the denial of a personal god does not apparently involve the denial of the existence of finite persons, (4) that personalism as a tenable explanation of the universe is now winning its way as against impersonal monism to a far wider acceptance, and that of the two explanations it is to be preferred, provided that it be freed from too rash and narrow a definition of the term "personal" and too loose a definition of the term "omnipotent," when these are used in conjunction with the word "deity."

We were next led to consider the alleged decline of the religious consciousness, and we saw that there was a variety of reasons for supposing that the consciousness of a personal god would not die out, but that given due opportunity for free development it might even achieve a wider acceptance than in the past.

We then went on to consider whether, granted the personalistic interpretation of the universe, and the permanence of the religious consciousness, any stage in the intercourse between the spirit of God and the spirit of man capable of being regarded as absolute in value for truth and life could reasonably be supposed to have emerged nearly two thousand years ago, or whether we could only look for gradual progress and development through a long chain of revelations or discoveries, none of them perfect,

but each and all related to a final and absolute truth, only to be reached in the infinity of the future. In this connection we saw that there was every reason to suppose that a climax could be reached before the end of the ages, and that it was perfectly congruous with the rest of our knowledge of the history of this planet for the religious climax to have been reached at the beginning of the Christian era, provided that what was so regarded as the climax was not obviously disqualified for the title by some patent defect or imperfection.

We then turned our attention to the traditional valuation of Christianity, and at some length surveyed its rise out of the intuition of a people whose leaders had surrendered themselves to receive the Divine message that at a certain critical juncture there would take place an act of God fraught with universal blessing and significance. We passed in review the Gospel records as giving the impression of Our Lord's having taken upon Himself the role of Absolute and Universal Messiah rather than of Nationalist Messiah. We also tried to show how, in the remainder of the book, the narrow and the world-wide, the Nationalist and the Catholic elements lay side by side unreconciled, the gradual emergence of the universal and absolute elements triumphing over the others as the Gospel spread in the Mediterranean world, and the infant church, as Canon Streeter puts it, was cut off from its home base. We then surveyed rapidly the treatment of the absoluteness of Christianity as it appears in the writings of the principal Christian theologians.

Before considering the altered view of the universe which has developed in recent times, and the way in which religious thinkers have tried to adjust their previously held beliefs to the newer conditions we found it necessary to examine three arguments which have been urged in favour of Christianity, (1) the great racial extent of its appeal, (2) its complete satisfaction of the needs of human nature, (3) its beneficial effects upon the life of the planet. We came to the conclusion that the first of these three arguments was the strongest, though we entered a warning against the appeal to numbers as a test of truth. The second argument we felt to be dangerous, and the third one we considered ought to be avoided, unless supported with a good deal of moderation, since in untried hands it was likely to recoil upon the user, however valuable it might be, and however close to the facts.

We then proceeded to the most important part of our subject, namely, an account of the attempts at reconstruction in which religious thinkers have sought to conserve for Christianity its central position amid the wider expanse of the universe as revealed by scientific research and exploration. The greatest of these attempts we considered to have been made by Professor Troeltsch, and although we could not wholly adopt his estimate of Christianity and its Founder, yet we felt that his massive treatment of the problem deserved careful study and reflection rather than negative criticism, and that Wendland's corollary of Troeltsch gave us almost the last word.

We then passed on to the slighter study found in Niebergall's *Which Is the Best Religion?* and following him a variety of reconstructive attempts, including those of Unitarians, Modernists, and Theosophists. The latter group claimed a rather large share of our attention, not by reason of its intellectual eminence, but because of its persistent appeal to a certain type of mind.

I am now faced with the task of putting as clearly as I can the conclusions, for what they are worth, to which my own share in the enquiry has led me. Let it be remembered that the suggestion was made in the Introduction that the world needed not a mere adjustment of Christian belief to enable it without serious inconvenience or loss of dignity to be retained by those who dislike change, but a glowing and positive creed not only intellectually satisfying, but also capable of instant application to human affairs. I can hardly presume that what follows has any right to be regarded as such, but it *is* at any rate a positive creed.

I. I believe then in the historical career of Christ, placed in its setting, as the religious climax of the planet, and as the decisive point in the intercourse between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man.

II. I believe that this historical career gives us the fixation and definition of the Character of God. That is to say, I take the statements of the Fourth Gospel, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and "He (*i.e.* the Spirit) shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you," as true to fact, whether they be verbatim

quotations or not. I regard them as justified in experience.¹

Wherein consists this Christian fixation and definition of the Divine Character? It may be said to consist in *nine* postulates.

1. God is *personal* in the highest sense in which personality can exist. He is admittedly far more complex than the most complex human personality of which we can be aware. In Him we discern the source and governing principle of all life, the creative force which indwells and inspires all truth, beauty, and goodness, and the spirit of love which conditions government and creation alike. We see no reason for not supposing that there are many heights and depths of His being of which we are wholly ignorant. Yet He is One, and the whole universe lies under His control. The whole is His kingdom, a realm in which divers ends and purposes are being worked out. Of these the dwellers upon the earth can hardly form any conception, save of those which actually concern the earth, but they believe that no divine purpose in which they are involved can be contradictory, though it may

¹By the Personality and career of Jesus Christ we are to gauge the standard of the Divine Fatherhood. By the Personality and career of Jesus Christ we are to "try the spirits," whether they be manifestations of the Divine Spirit. This is not Sabellianism, since the three lines of experience, Transcendent, Incarnate, and Immanent reveal three permanent elements in the Divine Being, but it must be admitted that the essential teaching of Christianity is that the Incarnate throws light upon the other two. This test must be applied relentlessly both to the decisions of Church Councils and to the promptings of enthusiasts whether in art, literature, social reform or metaphysics.

easily be complementary to others which are being worked out in other parts of the universe.

2. God is *Himself*. When we say that He is like something else we mean that He partially resembles it; but it is plain that He can have no duplicate or fellow. He is unique. There are elements in His Being which we cannot parallel, and which, therefore, we can only describe by naming them after something within our experience which they more or less resemble. We cannot truly describe God by making Him relative to the earth. The earth and all that is in it is relative to Him, and His interests are wider. It is to be noted that this uniqueness is displayed in the Personality of Jesus of Nazareth and in His values. He cannot really be compared or comprehended. His values are timeless, and when we find Him most Himself, then we are nearest to the secret heart of God.

3. God is *eternal*. He has neither beginning nor end, but is from everlasting to everlasting, yet always new. He is both old and young, and it is as true to depict Him under the guise of glowing youth as to conceive Him to be of infinite antiquity.

4. God is *eternally living, active and responsive*. He is the fount and inspiration of all that comes into being, and there is no ground for supposing that he ever spent a long period of quiescence and then suddenly acted, and then sank back again into the torpor of inactivity.

5. God is *holy*. That is to say His Personality expresses the perfection of what we mean by goodness, beauty, and truth. He is the full orb and

completely balanced combination of all that we hold to be good, true and beautiful. The sense of aloofness which such perfection involves is due to the incompatibility that exists between order and disorder. It is this holiness which gives Jesus in part that appearance of isolation among men. It is not imperfection which cuts us off from Him so much as contradiction. "Can two walk together," says the Hebrew prophet, "except they be agreed?"

6. God is *love*. From the eternity of His Being He is the perfection of unselfishness. Love constrained Him to limit and express Himself in the evolution of the universe. One sometimes encounters expressions which seem to suggest that the Divine Love is centred upon the earth, so that the universe in some way serves the dwellers upon this planet, and by its service expresses that love. I do not think that this is necessarily involved in the Christian faith concerning the Divine Character. As earth-dwellers we naturally tend to be interested in what concerns our own immediate circle of experience, but the Christian church has taken over as one of its great hymns the Benedicite, in which the bodies and powers of the universe are called upon to bless God in the Christian sense; while the Johannine doctrine of the Logos represents the latter, first as the source of *all* being in the universe, and afterwards as incarnate upon the earth. When we speak therefore of the cosmic position of Jesus, we are speaking inaccurately, unless we define further what we mean by Jesus. If we mean that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily

and that through that indwelling His Humanity was lifted up to such an honour and dignity as humanity had never hitherto reached, then it is clear that the fulness of the Godhead that dwelt in Him, always has and always will have a cosmic position, but the earthly Humanity of Jesus only has a cosmic position through its union with the Divine Logos.¹ The Divine Love then is not the private privilege of earth-dwellers; but the conditions of earthly existence have made it both necessary and fitting that on this planet it should be purposively and dramatically displayed in supreme excellence through the historical career of a single human being. In holding the historical career of Jesus of Nazareth to be of absolute value in this respect there is no denial of the Divine Love as existing from eternity or of the Divine Love as enduring to Eternity. Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and equally He implies, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Spirit." The climax makes denial neither of its antecedents nor of its consequences.

7. God *acts* on this planet *in perfect harmony* with the conditions which prevail upon it, *i.e.* through history and in time. The beautiful human life of Jesus is the central response of God to man as well as the highest spiritual achievement of humanity. Jesus the Man is God acting in a human frame. He is the Divine Word made flesh. He is the window by which we see into the mind of God. In Him

¹ "One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." (Quicunque.)

we see God engaged in doing the greatest thing He has ever done upon this planet ; we see the Eternal Spirit dwelling upon it in terms of manhood, and suffering unjustly as though He were a criminal, to prove His love for humanity. This " God-story " (for that is the meaning of the word gospel) I hold to be unique and central for us who live on this earth, and although I believe it to be in perfect congruity with the view of the universe presented to us to-day by scientific research, I also believe its chief value to lie in the fact that it is a story rather than a philosophy, so that it is possible to tell quite simple people about the nature and the career of God. I hold this belief in God through Jesus to be the Catholic Faith, since Catholic means universal, and there is no other belief about God which contains more truth, or is more fitted to express the spiritual experience of every race and class of humanity, nor does it seem likely that there will ever be.

8. Involved in the foregoing it might be expected that we should regard *the Fatherhood of God*. This is true, but it is not adequate. The real truth is that we are led by the study of history to expect that in the Personality of Jesus we shall discover a definition both clear and final of those divine attributes which have been dimly discerned and imperfectly understood. Thus we find notions of love and fatherhood, of universal parentage, of holiness, of self-sacrifice and of judgment not only in the Hebrew prophetic conception of God but in Gentile conceptions. But when we come to

Jesus we re-explore the meaning of God backwards from Him, and all His attributes take on a fresh beauty and a new meaning. The result is that we find in God not only fatherhood but motherhood, not only justice but charity, not only transcendent governance but indwelling inspiration, not only majesty but homeliness, not only austerity but tender compassion and forgiveness.

9. God is *Almighty* in the sense that the universe is ultimately under His control. It is a strange wild place, but to regard it as ultimately evil is contrary to the instincts of healthy humanity even in its very darkest moments. It is said that a limited God might be a defeated God. The Christian fixation and definition of the character of God plainly show Him as limited. If He is limited against His will, then that implies some Being in the universe who is greater than He is, and who is therefore capable of limiting Him ; and this further suggests that the power of God regarded as good is a fluctuating quantity, so that when He was limited His power was less than the evil power that limited it, while it remains a matter of speculation as to whether He will triumph in the end. As touching God's expression of Himself in and through the material universe, and as touching His relations with this planet, I hold that the Christian fixation and definition show Him to be self-limited. At the time, therefore, of His limitation (if indeed we can speak of a time, seeing that God is from everlasting) there was no power greater than God capable of limiting Him, but His self-limitation by His own

will and purpose has produced that power and suffers its existence in order that He may express His thought and purpose through love, that is through an almightiness which not only brings into existence beings resembling itself but renounces its control over them save in so far as it brings them to the knowledge of its love, in order that their power to win freedom may be real and not illusory.

God, therefore, is subject to the conditions which He has Himself created, and is no longer unlimited. Yet, as has been said, no healthy-minded faith can conceive of His great purpose as being ultimately defeated. We have confidence in our Leader, and we regard the historical fact of the victory of Jesus of Nazareth as an earnest of the final victory which is yet to be won. Our faith in the omnipotence of God is not faith in a sledge-hammer, but means nothing more nor less than that we are prepared to stake our lives upon and trust our destinies to the final triumph of the purpose of a God who is personal, eternal, eternally living and active, holy, and loving with a love than which no greater can be conceived, leading Him to express Himself in the material universe by self-limitation, and in particular upon this planet in the historical career of Jesus of Nazareth. If this faith be doomed to disappointment, then it were better to die disappointed with the Author and Finisher of our faith, than to contemplate an eternity of existence with the sinister power which would in that case prove to be victorious. Happily, Christian

experience tells a tale that confirms us in a sure and certain hope, and enables us even in the very darkest hours of earthly existence to rest confident that

“ Love, love that once for all did agonise,
Shall conquer all things to itself ! If late
Or soon this fall, I ask not nor surmise,—
And when my God is waiting I can wait.” ¹

III. I believe that along with this fixation and definition of the Divine Character is also to be found the fixation and definition of the ideal human character. I believe that as the result of the establishment of the absoluteness of Christianity the principles of right living are settled once and for all, however much development may ensue in detail. It is said that Christ affirms the values which we human beings in our best moments regard as absolute. I do not know whether it is safe to regard this statement as strong enough. Christ seems to me sometimes to affirm values which are beyond those that we conceive even in our very best moments. Still, whatever they are I believe them to be final, and that His authority in affirming them must be accepted, though the full achievement of them may even demand many centuries of struggle and development. I believe Christianity to be the highest form of personalistic belief because it makes relationships between persons to involve mutual and corporate *service*, giving and not getting, fellowship and not hostile competition, sharing rather than condescending bestowal. The full implications

¹ Christina Rossetti.

of all this must be reserved for discussion in the next chapter.

IV. I believe that interpretation of all history to be the true one which makes the career of Jesus of Nazareth the moral and spiritual climax in the annals of this planet, and arranges all other events around it.

V. I believe that from this climax onwards the history of the planet has been one of a gradual conquest, in which, through many vicissitudes and with many a set-back the Divine Spirit co-operating with human spirits (whatever other designs He may have been pursuing in the universe) has sought to bring humanity as a whole into loyal conformity with the pattern and purpose set forth in the ideals of that great climax.

VI. I am convinced that the evidence taken as a whole shows it to be in the highest degree improbable that there can be any new or higher religion to supersede Christianity. The evidence, however, shows equally clearly that this absolute character of our religion has not prevented it from undergoing in the past the most revolutionary changes of expression, and therefore that we must be prepared for the possible advent of no less revolutionary changes in the future.

But some one may say: Why this elaborate argument to conserve Christianity as absolute? Why not make a clean cut, and believe, without hampering oneself with any theories as to how things will eventually work out, that we are still discovering God, that He is still revealing Himself

to us, and that we are bound by no past prophecies or forth-tellings, by no past discoveries or revelations, (since all were partial), but are free to take just whatever comes with fresh and open minds. I admit the apparent convenience of this, but it is unfortunately just what we cannot do. It seems to be a law of life that we are forbidden to ignore our past experiences as a race of beings, and these experiences show us that in many things the future does not hold as much advance in store for us as we might have expected. In a variety of instances it merely glorifies the past, or republishes the truth of it. There is no rule of uniform progress either in religion or anything else. Moreover, even those who have tried to shake themselves free have shown themselves more deeply indebted than they were aware to the achievements of preceding centuries. History is history. Fact is fact. Time and the course of events are realities.

On the other hand, once this dependence upon past experience has been admitted, and proper respect has been paid to the evidence of history, there is every reason in the world why, in the application of our experience and in the forward movement which we make from our historical basis, we should be wholly courageous, and eagerly receptive of fresh experience. It has been well said that the history of spiritual religion is the tracing out of a chain, the final link of which we ourselves have not yet attained to. In the vision which we have experienced in the career of Christ we have stretched forward in expectation to that

final link, and in the faltering progress of the Christian Church we are now gradually inch by inch realizing in fact what we have stretched forward to in expectation.¹ I firmly hold Christianity to be in essence the common world religion of the future, for whose triumph and dominance we must all work, and whose spread will involve the breaking down of all nationalist and racial barriers, and the establishment of a world commonwealth "of all peoples, nations, and languages"—a consummation for which this whole earth wistfully waits to-day with as fervent an anxiety as those who nineteen centuries ago were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

¹ See Troeltsch, *Gesammelte werke*, p. 362.

CHAPTER IX

CONSEQUENCES OF THIS BELIEF

MANY volumes might be written upon the consequences of adopting the Christian standpoint as absolute. I disclaim therefore any attempt at making this chapter a full and complete statement. It is to be regarded rather as a postscript, and many will say that the matter of which it treats deserves a great deal more attention than I have been able to give it. This I cannot help. My proper object is to confirm if I can the absoluteness of Christianity. If I have in any way been successful there will be ample opportunity for others to work out the details of all that is implied therein. I propose therefore, merely to make a few suggestions for further discussion and they will be under four heads :—

1. Consequences in conduct.
2. Consequences in atonement.
3. Consequences for the Church.
4. Consequences for the future life.

There is obviously nothing new in any of these four topics but I submit that it can do no harm to

look at them each in turn as they confront us to-day, just as though (if we can bring ourselves to imagine it) we had never before thought of applying Christianity as absolute to any one of them.

I

Consequences in conduct.

It need hardly be said that no acceptance of the absoluteness of Christianity is real which does not affect the mainsprings of conduct. Yet it is just in respect of this that organized Christianity is open to the severest criticism. One would have supposed that the stronger and more stable the Christian community became, the greater would be its realization of Christian principles in conduct, and the greater its influence upon the ethics of the world in which it is set. Yet as a matter of fact "the Church in power has done badly." When her existence has hardly been tolerated she has then best displayed the virtues of her Lord. Everyone recognizes the obvious reason for this. It is well-known that to convert men in a mass to any faith is certain to lead to insincerity and nominal discipleship. Pastoral experience and missionary history alike supply ample evidence of the woeful results of mass movements where there is no real conviction on the part of the individual. The conversion of the world to Christ may seem to have been slow, but it can hardly be denied that in Europe it is now plainly shown to have been not only much too rapid but also largely superficial.

It is therefore a mistake to use the argument from morals as evidence against the absoluteness of Christianity, since among a very large mass of professing Christians the authority implied in that absoluteness has for generations never seriously been considered. We must look to those individuals and those sections of the community where the principle has really been grasped if we seek to discover what kind of consequences ensue in conduct from the absolute confession, "There is but one Lord, Jesus Christ." I think it is also fair to say that there have been frequent and well-meaning attempts on quite a large scale in various parts of the world to make conduct the consequence of Christian faith. It can hardly be denied that the Mediterranean world of the thirteenth century presents on the whole an attempt at a closed society in which Latin Christianity was held to be absolute. Or again, if we were to take English society about the year 1860, I think it might fairly be said that there was a sort of biblical protestantism of a decidedly Christian temper upon which Anglicans and Nonconformists were tolerably agreed, and which for the bulk of the inhabitants of this country provided a basis for conduct. It is urged, however, by the opponents of Christianity, that the consequences in conduct on a large scale which have hitherto been witnessed are not attractive, and do not betray that immeasurable superiority which should denote the ethics of an absolute religion.

There are two things to be said in reply to this. In the first place, wherever you get ethics organized

however carefully, something is lost in freshness and spontaneity. I entirely deny that the individual saints of the Christian Church (I do not of course mean necessarily the canonized ones) are anything but triumphant instances of the absolute Lordship of Christ, and I do not believe that they can be equalled among the adherents of any other religion. But these are exceptional examples, and organized conduct falls far below their standard. In the second place, our knowledge of Christ, both of His Personality and His teaching, has made such vast strides during the past half century that we are certainly nearer to a true appreciation of Him than for example, our forefathers of the Reformation period, although we are lamentably slow to take advantage of our position, and the fact that it is ours is no credit to ourselves. This enhanced opportunity of appreciation, however, does mean that when the absolute Lordship of Christ is accepted nowadays it will be accepted in a much more thoroughgoing way, and its consequences on a large scale are likely to prove more penetrating.

Reverting to the earlier point it needs to be said that the wide acceptance of some injunction as worthy of absolute obedience need not necessarily be nominal or superficial. Everything depends upon the thoroughness and sincerity with which pastors and teachers carry out their task. If there are parishes where a large attendance at public worship is accompanied by a low standard of morals, there are also parishes where an equally punctilious worship is accompanied by sound and wholesome

living. Bad and good teaching are at the root of both kinds of cases. Similarly, in matters of public health, careful and persistent teaching has not only persuaded a very large number of individual citizens to adopt clean habits, but has also convinced officials that it is really worth while strictly to enforce the laws of sanitation. The general progress in sanitary matters of the past fifty years may be said to be due to the thorough application of scientific principles which were found to be true absolutely. Yet, just as in religion there may be found plenty of professing Christians whose conduct does not square with their profession, so there may be found citizens in a community which has adopted the most salutary by-laws for the promotion of bodily health, whose persons and dwellings show not the slightest regard for the very principles of hygiene on which those by-laws are based. Moral and spiritual teaching, to have permanent results in character must be both thorough and prolonged as well as attractive. It is often said that the religious teaching given in elementary schools seems to be forgotten by the time maturity is reached. So also for the matter of that is a very large amount of the secular teaching. It is probable that an English artisan of twenty-four would pass just as bad (and as good) an examination in the English history which he learnt before he was fourteen as in the New Testament narratives which he learnt during the same period of his life. These things have to be taken into account when we come to consider the effect of religion upon conduct. The effect, even of an absolute religion, is bound to be

negligible if it is taught in such a futile and scrappy fashion as to present to the simple and busy worker no straightforward system of belief and practice. And even if it is fairly well taught, by the time he is grown up he will have forgotten much of it, unless what he learnt before he was fourteen years of age, has been linked up with his adolescent period. I submit, therefore, that the first consequence of any conviction that may be derived from the argument of this book as to the absoluteness of Christianity should be to make those responsible determined to have it very much better taught. The results of sound training in individuals, and in families where it has been possible to give proper attention to the individual, shows what can be done by the Spirit of Christ to train character; but I have little hope even for the best class teaching, whether in day school, Sunday school, or confirmation class, where the class work is not balanced by a great deal of private work with individuals. It may be necessary to go more slowly in order to work more thoroughly. We can never afford to overlook the fact that "Religion is seldom taught. It is more often caught from some one who has it." ¹

Let us now picture the possible consequences of not adopting the Christian ideal as a final standard for conduct. It is not at all difficult to do this since there are already numbers of people who say boldly that morality is an open question, and that criticism has destroyed the claim of the Christian ideal to be regarded as final. Upon what do these

¹ *Cambridge Essays on Education*, "Religion," W. R. Inge.

people fall back in lieu of Christianity? Most of them, not being by temperament anarchists, probably also possessing neither the courage nor the means to break loose from society, are content so long as they are in a minority to accept the greater part of the conventions of conduct which are current, but to transgress them whenever it seems convenient, safe or profitable to do so. They do not, however, regard these conventions for the most part as final. Some of them are external, others private, and of those which are external the transgression of some at present brings the offender into collision with the state. The bolder spirits then move probably in the direction of transgressing every convention, both public and private, the breaking of which does not involve them in a legal penalty. The boldest spirits of all hold themselves free to dispense with all conventions and are ready if need be to become outlaws. Now it is obvious that of the conventions to which we have referred some may be as near as we can humanly speaking hope to get to obedience to the Spirit of Christ. Of this kind is that which agrees that between sane people truth-telling should be observed. It is impossible to imagine any private convention or public law which would order one to tell part of the truth. However imperfectly the convention may be observed through human infirmity, it can never consist in anything but that "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," is to be told. In regard to marriage, however, the case is somewhat different. The Christian ideal of lifelong monogamy may be

accepted both by the state and by individuals, and yet the state may not see its way to enforce the ideal in such a way as to prohibit divorce and re-marriage in every circumstance; and it is only by treating the words of Christ with regard to marriage as law rather than as principle that we are able to exclude the possibility of allowing divorce to take place in certain circumstances. Similarly, with regard to the command to love one's neighbour. It is obvious that the state cannot enforce love. All it can do is to create conditions under which it is possible for people to show the maximum of consideration towards one another and under which it is uncomfortable to be inconsiderate; and the stringency of such conditions will be regulated in proportion to the amount of Christian love displayed by members of the community towards one another. So long as the spirit of Christian charity moves people adequately to support hospitals, so long will it be unnecessary for them to be paid for out of the rates and taxes. Yet, in an exceptionally Christian community, Christian spirit might actually produce state hospitals because the whole community might be agreed that the support of the hospitals was essential and might simply refer to the state the collection of hospital dues as a matter of convenience. It is difficult in practice to imagine such a community, since it would presuppose so high a standard of citizenship as to make Church and state virtually identical and eliminate the necessity of the use of force which is the usual prerogative of states.

A fourth kind of convention is that in which the love of one's neighbour under different conditions may involve either of two courses of conduct which are diametrically opposed to one another. For example, to take interest for lending money was regarded by the medieval Church as unchristian. To-day responsible Christian opinion does not denounce the imposition of a moderate charge for the use of capital. Money-lending¹ like any other sort of trade is held by Christians to be legitimate so long as profiteering is avoided, and a money-lender who charges exorbitant interest simply becomes an individual instance of a profiteer. Indeed, between private individuals it may sometimes plainly be seen to be morally harmful for a person to have the use of a piece of property without paying for it. The borrower does not appreciate that for which he pays nothing, and the lender is unjustly treated since he loses the use of his property without receiving any equivalent in return, and this he may not be able to afford to do.

Trade in certain substances may, however, at different periods be regarded as morally right or morally wrong. It is held by many that substances which are universally necessary such as land, fresh air, pure water, minerals (or at any rate coal) and the simplest kinds of food ought to be under the control of the whole community vested in the executive officers of its government so that no private profit or interest can possibly be made out of the needs or misfortunes of the individual.

¹ Especially by banks, private or state.

The final instance to be taken here is one that is fresh in our minds. The right of the state or of the individual to take human life has of necessity been hotly debated during the past five years, and the results are now pretty clear. It is evident to all that Christ nowhere explicitly rejects the claim of the state to take human life when necessary. War and slavery are here on a like footing, and it must be obvious that there is a great similarity between the arguments by which war and capital punishment as permanent elements in the power of the state have been defended and the arguments by which educated men were prepared in the middle of the nineteenth century to justify slavery in the United States or are prepared to-day to defend systems of indentured labour in Africa or the Pacific. Yet, however clever these arguments, they can none of them stand against the unique value set by Christ upon all life, and especially upon human personality. We may concede to the state the power to hold in reserve against exceptional circumstances its right to kill, but Christian permeation of social and political life cannot lead to anything else but the gradual elimination as swiftly and steadily as may be of the use and the necessity of the use of force whether in its extremer or its milder forms. The only point at issue between Christians is the rate at which progress may go on.

It will be evident from these instances that those persons who decline to view Christian ideals of conduct as divinely ordered or final, will not at the outset be found in the mass to be greatly differentiated

from those who do. They will retain many of the conventions in order to avoid trouble, and since much public organization falls very far short of completely realizing the Spirit of Christ, Christians who are content to be conventional will be able for some time to come to share with non-Christians in public life.

Five things, however, clearly emerge.

I. In the first place it cannot be doubted that the acceptance of Christianity as absolute, so far from binding us to an unprogressive morality which may become obsolete, is a bold declaration that the ideal temper for human conduct both public and private has been fixed and standardized once and for all, and that it is going to take all the rest of the period occupied by the history of this planet to get the ideals of Christ adequately expressed in every department of human activity. *In this sense then there is a real progress in morality.* A Christian master owning Christian slaves was not in the first century an unfaithful Christian.¹ But he very soon found that

¹ Yet even here there is a danger. The desire to meet a current situation has led Christians sometimes so to adapt their ethics as to make them indistinguishable from those of the state. Thus, for example, it was right for Christian ministers to follow their flocks into the army and to shepherd them there. It was a mistake for them so far to try to divest themselves of their ordained status as officers of an international society as to adopt the current methods of speaking of the enemy and to interest themselves largely in promoting the efficiency of the military machine. They were justified in doing so and even in acting as combatants if they *felt* it their duty. But I hold them to have been mistaken. The only hope of promoting Christian internationalism was and is for the ministerial priesthood to keep itself as free as possible from all national bias and prejudice. In this it must be a pioneer. Its members must confine themselves to the main purpose for which they exist, and leave side issues alone.

his principles led him to free his slaves, and to-day a slave-owning Christian would be worse than an anachronism. In Norman England the Church allowed a point of law to be settled by combat, and two individuals might thus fight a duel without necessarily forfeiting church membership. Yet such a proceeding is unthinkable in an English parish to-day, and devout folk dislike even litigation and avoid it whenever they can. The position of married women in Tudor times does not, judging from the prayer-book, seem to be that which a large number of Christian laymen would feel it their duty to give to their wives to-day. Yet we have no desire to deny the title of Christian either to Cranmer or Parker.

2. In the second place there is a real and a serious difference between the person who is progressing with some idea of the direction in which he is going and the explorer who has renounced the past and is floundering aimlessly into the future. It is the explorer who sometimes draws the attention of the Christian to a new situation which it is his duty to Christianize, but the Christian need not necessarily follow the explorer. When one encounters some one who is expressing discontent with current Christian conventions, one can always "try the spirit" by asking, "Do you desire the world to grow nearer to the perfect expression of the Mind of Christ or do you not?" Christian convention is not necessarily identically the same as conduct governed by and expressing the spirit of Christ. But it is in many instances "the next best thing." So long as it is

not regarded as final or perfect, it is not to be hastily thrown aside and rejected. We must make the most of it on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread, and strive to alter it in favour of a better approximation to the ideal.

3. In the third place, let us appeal to our friends the progressive moralists, to be as logical as they possibly can in rejecting both the dogmas of religion and also those principles of conduct which are involved therein. If, for instance, Monsieur Salomon Reinach is right in saying that religion is a collection of scruples which act as an obstacle to the free exercise of our senses, very well then—let us put aside the scruples and see what happens. Instantly we get ample justification for the extinction of the bourgeois by the proletariat, provided the latter is strong enough, or vice versa, provided the bourgeois is strong enough. This is only to apply evolutionist ethics without any unnecessary modification to human breeds. If the brown rat is strong enough to exterminate the black rat why should it not do so? If Rome and Carthage or England and Germany are rivals in commerce, by all means let them try conclusions and see which is to be wiped out. If the Mongols are strong enough to overthrow Western civilization, let them go ahead and substitute their own for it. It is to be presumed that M. Reinach has no use for marriage of any sort. Commerce between the sexes is to be restricted as little as possible, and the children will all be brought up on municipal farms. It is difficult to know how much liberty to the individual this mental attitude

is really prepared to allow, but in all probability those who adopt it do not at present know themselves, but are simply feeling their way and improvising as they go along. This would certainly seem to be the case as far as the dictatorship of Lenin is concerned. I am not here at pains to make any attempt at rivalling these persons in the art of improvisation. My plea is simply for consistency. There is actually not much difference between the evolutionist ethics of a Bolshevik republic and the pagan ethics of a well-organized province of the Roman Empire. Both governments have killed pretty freely, and both treat man mainly as "a land animal." The one is a dictatorship of the top-rail to the bottom. The other is a dictatorship of the bottom rail to the top. There is no question here of the commonweal of all sorts and conditions of men. From this to the kingdom of God is as far as from hell to heaven. The Roman provincial kept the numbers of the sexes fairly equal by exposing the superfluous girl-babies. An evolutionist republic will perhaps prefer the lethal chamber and the municipal crematorium, and would certainly administer euthanasia to all sorts of diseased people. It is indeed odd that evolutionist ethics should claim to be progressive. They are as old as the world, merely in fact the law of the jungle (the real jungle, not Mowgli's jungle which is hardly fierce enough) administered by animals on two legs with very large brains.

4. Over against this will have to be placed the claims of the free exponents of religion who disown

the evolutionist ethic, whether expounded by capital or by labour, and who seek a modification of religious ethics, believing that the present Christian ones are capable of development and improvement. To these I would say, "Examine your dogma"; free yourselves from presuppositions; consider carefully whether the creative period in religion has not gone by, and whether so far from the Holy Spirit leading you beyond present good and evil, you are being conducted to a campaign in the defence and preservation as well as for the extension of what you already hold, since the world is much more in danger of losing the little good it has than of having its plenitude of virtue marred by the excrescence which is called Christian morality."

5. There remains the recent remark of Mr. Clutton Brock: "The function of the Church is to supersede morality altogether with the sense of God." One can readily sympathize with the feeling of reaction which has prompted this assertion. It is a protest against the repeated efforts of the state to use the Church as a moral policeman, and of certain teachers to represent religion as a collection of tabus. But although I share Mr. Brock's abhorrence for both these most objectionable attempts to pervert religion from the right way, I cannot help asking: "If the function of the Church is to make God felt—what sort of God are we to feel?" Now there can be no doubt whatever that the Christian view of God is not one of a Mohammedan deity with no rules at all, not even of a weakly benevolent "good fellow," but of a God who stands for Order

as well as Love, a very definitely moral being, who holds a certain standard and ideal of conduct as absolute, and takes certain fundamentals as *final*. One may not agree with the fundamentals, but one can hardly deny that this is the case. It will not easily be established, for instance, that a wild pagan nature-thrill ending in sexual promiscuity is as good as or superior to the consecration of holy wedlock by the blessing of the Deity whose existence is implied in the Sermon on the Mount. I cannot see how we are going to maintain the inevitably and inviolably holy character of God, and at the same time make full communicant membership of the visible Church open to any chance millionaire divorcee who may happen to live in the manor house. The publicans and sinners do, it is true, crowd into the Kingdom of Heaven, but in my practical experience they always have to get shriven first, and they never expect to be excused. If Christianity is absolute then we certainly cannot afford to cheapen the Sacraments, or put up with nominal disciples. By all means let the Church recognize that all are not born with the same capacity for achieving good works, and that tenderness with sinners is a first principle, but let her keep her standard of membership and of office-bearing as high as possible.¹

¹ It is a sad (but in view of the weakness of mortal nature) a salutary thing that some clergy should from time to time be unfrocked, suspended, or reprovved for conduct unworthy of officers in Christ's Church, but it always seems a pity that we have no discipline to deal with the delinquencies of dignitaries. Every Roman Catholic bishop from the Pope downwards has

Where one rejoices to unite with Mr. Brock is in affirming that the essential consequence of the Christian belief is to do away with the idea that life and especially religious life, is made up of the observance of a number of petty rules and restrictions, qua rules and restrictions. The life of the Christian is most emphatically *not* legalistic. Morality severed from a personalistic creed is like rules of behaviour severed from the loving mother who acts upon them in training her children. It is like the King's Regulations for the Army treated in vacuo as "the whole dutie of a soldier," without the consciousness of fighting in a magnificent cause against a ruthless enemy, a consciousness which alone made those regulations bearable.

II

Consequences in atonement.

Orthodox theology has universally agreed that the career of Jesus of Nazareth in some way effected a reconciliation between the Divine Spirit and the inhabitants of this planet. What is the relation of this belief to the claim of absoluteness as far as Christianity is concerned?

his confessor. In the absence of a similar system among Anglicans and Free Churchmen one would venture to suggest that we badly need some recognized method by which clergy in posts of high responsibility can be kept humble. An army commander who loses an action knows that he is liable to be relieved of his command, but a bishop or clergyman who fails to administer his diocese or parish with tact and gentle firmness, or who becomes spoiled by success, is seldom if ever removed or censured.

Granted such a reconciliation to be needed there seems no valid reason why it should not, in some way, be connected with the historical life of Christ. But it is urged that the knowledge of Christ and the life in communion with Him cannot be necessary to salvation, since this would involve the unevangelized heathen of past, present, or future ages either in total damnation or else in the dire and urgent need of exceptional and uncovenanted mercies. Why then, says the critic, if you believe in the mercy and goodness of God and in the widespread alienation of the human race from its Natural Parent, should you believe the means of reconciliation to be so much restricted as to time and place? This is the old question, attributed in the fourth Gospel to the Apostle Jude: "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" It is not a little curious that those who express surprise at this apparent curtailment of the benefits of spiritual reconciliation, seem able to ignore what one would have thought, on the same hypothesis, was still more startling, namely the very great restriction of most of the material benefits which inspiration and discovery have conferred on mankind. The fruits for instance of the science of bacteriology, which have done so much to enable us to wipe out disease and to limit the spread of epidemics, have only recently been gathered. Countless millions have perished in agony through lack of knowledge which, to us, is easy of access. In India to-day, under British rule, much preventible disease goes unchecked, and something

like 23,000 general practitioners would be required if the population were to be half as well off in respect of medical aid as the population of this country. In China at the moment there are barely a dozen workhouse infirmaries and only a few thousand yards of mains providing a decent water supply. If, then, bodily health be the will of God, it may be argued that the laws of health should surely not have been left to the discovery of one definite historical period and region of the world. We can only conclude that it is the Divine Will for our race to achieve spiritual and bodily progress along the lines of historical development which govern all human thought. According to this the object of human existence upon the earth is the production, by means of a series of historical processes of an ideal spiritual and bodily human life; but the preservation of the normal lines of development of the populations with which this globe teems, can only be reconciled with belief in the Divine goodness, mercy, and justice by the further belief that the fortunes of the innumerable company of souls dwelling under material conditions upon this planet are not confined to the petty span of those conditions. In other words, belief in empirical science and in historical Christianity as the working out of the will of a good deity stands or falls with the belief in personal immortality. If, however, the belief in immortality be conceded, then the Historical Act of Reconciliation performed in time can be regarded without inconsistency as among the greatest, if indeed it is not the very greatest, of the

Acts of God which adorn the record of the life and development of our planet.

What relation does this bear to the doctrines of "the finished work of Atonement" and "the heavenly session" on the one hand, and "the heavenly intercession of Christ" and "the perpetual presentation of the Great Sacrifice" on the other?

It is, I suppose, true to say that the general tendency of Christian thought in recent times has been in the direction of an insistence upon St. Paul's statement, "God was in Messiah reconciling the world unto Himself," and to an acceptance of the parable of the prodigal son or of the Good Shepherd, as explaining the terms of the process. The career of Jesus is the unveiling of the Love and Character of the Father to the mind of the prodigal; it is the seeking of the lost by the Good Shepherd at the cost of His Life. Therefore it saves. It breaks the heart. It bends the stubborn will. It stirs the spirit to the utterance of the cry "Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa, I will arise and return. Too long, O thou ancient Beauty, have I disregarded thee. I am unworthy to be called child of God."

Now all this is an emphasis upon the Divinity of Our Lord. In this sense we regard the "finished work" as finished by God. It is God's act, and the heavenly session is the triumph of the Love of God. Divine Love sits enthroned above the universe because it has won its throne by a sacrifice which shows that it is true to itself. When we approach God and "plead the sacrifice" we make public confession that we recognize the glory and

potency of the Divine Action. We plead to be received into intimacy with the Divine Fatherhood by acknowledging with humble gratitude the immeasurable self-denial of the Divine Humiliation, and by solemnly pledging ourselves as individuals and as a fellowship to make our individual characters harmonize with the Divine Character. We submit ourselves passively to a contemplation of the Crucified, and re-enact His Passion with all the resources of dramatic art, and by such contemplation and communion we enable the Grace of His Personality to enter into our own personalities.

But there is the other side of the picture. Our Lord is God Incarnate. In Jesus God acts as Man and the manhood which He took and used and glorified is, if He is Absolute, the crown of human moral and spiritual achievement. Jesus is in this sense the Representative Man. Therefore the Human Jesus stands for the achievement of something that every single, earnest individual would willingly achieve if he could, but knows that he will not achieve in this world to the same degree of absolute perfection. The Humanity of Jesus is thus the setting up of a human standard, the paying of a debt to an ideal, the conformity of God to His own moral standard for man, the satisfaction by Man of the Divine Desire for Human Perfection. Taken in this way "the finished work" is the noblest work that the human race has done or will ever do. It is the stuff of which heroes and saints are created, since they all point towards Jesus as their ideal.

"The heavenly session" is the triumph of Man. Man in one representative instance wins through to his ideal. He enters Heaven. The first of a new race of beings "gets to God."

Man may, in the past, have been "a land animal." Henceforward in Jesus he is "a new creature." Humanity may, if it so wishes, find the path to the production of a real race of super-men.

In this sense truly may we "plead the great sacrifice," and as worshippers of the Perfect Man, may indeed say

"Look Father, look on His anointed face
And only look on us as found in Him.
Look not on our misusings of Thy Grace
Our prayer so languid and our faith so dim,"

and pray, with the full moral determination to fashion ourselves after the pattern of the Christ life. "Take us as we are, for the sake of what we may ultimately become." It is in respect of His humanity that Jesus is the High Priest who intercedes.

The question is repeatedly asked: "How does Christ save us?" The answer emerges clearly, I think, from the foregoing considerations. God's Act saves mankind by the touch and uplift that come from the vision of the Divine Character: "Thou *must* love ME who have died for thee." Man's achievement saves, through the acceptance by the individual of the great ideal of Jesus, by identification of the individual with it, by a passive recognition and contemplation of it leading to an expression of the ideal in the individual.

III

Consequences for the Church.

Here the first and foremost point that emerges is the absoluteness of the "church" as a permanent element in religion. Our Lord cannot be said to have "founded" it, but He did recognize that the Church is a permanent part of human life just as is the State. There has always been a church in human society and there always will be. Therefore, in the Absolute Religion there is still a church. It does not follow that the Absolute Religion can be detached from the Church, since a church is the normal and indispensable expression of religion. Neither does it follow that everything in the Christian Church is an expression of the Spirit of Christ. Let it be admitted frankly and boldly that there are elements in Church life and organization which have their counterpart in non-Christian church systems, such as the use of sacred books, the observance of festival days, the expression of religious doctrine and emotion by ceremonial, the maintenance of a carefully ordered succession of ministers. No one of the above can be regarded any longer as the exclusive possession of the Christian Church. Yet, on the other hand, they are not in essence *anti-Christian*, but are capable of being wielded and consecrated for the service and glory of Jesus. Their use or their misuse can only be judged by referring them to the standard set by His Holy Spirit. Do they harmonize with it, or do they conflict?

Distinct from these elements is another group which is essentially anti-Christian, and which needs expurgation. This includes such features as race and class distinctions in worship or in philanthropy, the non-moral and *ex opere operato* use of sacraments and ceremonial, the denial of priesthood to the individual lay person, and the identification of the Church in any country with its national quarrels or aspirations, irrespective of their consonance with the Spirit of Jesus.

The re-establishment of Our Lord's Absoluteness seems to me to help the Church in two ways.

1. Towards internal peace.
2. Towards an external programme.

1. *Internal peace.* It is clear gain to all competing Christian denominations to have to face the attack of those who say: "What does it matter which Christian sect is the best or most orthodox? All are together simply phenomena of a faith which is passing away." In the face of such an attack, which threatens to take the wind out of the sails of every denominational barque, differences tend to look rather foolish, and Christian thinkers are compelled to get back to first principles. But in so doing they re-discover the prime test of all institutional development, *i.e.* agreement with the Spirit of Jesus. Therefore every denominational feature is compelled to justify itself at the bar of the Spirit. Is the question one of secession from some branch of the Church? Let the would-be seceders ask themselves, is this the step which the Spirit of Jesus approves? Is it a matter of the acceptance or

rejection of some useful moral discipline? Let those who are in doubt consider whether the discipline really helps to build character in accordance with the Spirit of Jesus. Is it a matter of a long-established custom? The existence of the custom argues that the experience of the majority found it wise and helpful. Yet even majorities may err; and therefore there is again the final test; does the will of the majority here coincide with the Purpose of the Spirit, or has the majority followed the line of least resistance and been disloyal to the Spirit? Is it a matter of the right of private judgment? The individual must ask: "Is my judgment necessarily right because it is my own? Have I submitted it to the test of the experience of others, whether spiritual experts, or experts in the sifting of evidence or the pursuit of truth? Have I the confidence based on sound judgment that my view is that of the Spirit of Jesus? Or am I perhaps exaggerating a single aspect of the truth?" Is it finally a question of truth? Both groups and individuals are plainly swayed by prejudice, and liable to make mistakes through lack of precise knowledge. All Church-people must, therefore, be trained to a courageous faith, to a love of truth at all costs; and since all cannot be specialists in research, nor even amateur theologians, it is vitally important that those who have to accept at second-hand the knowledge of the actions of God in history, should be able to feel confident that their accredited teachers have this courageous faith and this love of truth. Once they suspect them of concealing facts

for fear of shocking, or of nursing prejudices, once they convict them of timidity or blindness to plain evidence, they will no longer listen to their appeal. The teachers of the Church must have the same authority as that of Jesus, *i.e.* the authority that comes from experience and honest facing of the facts and truths of everyday life.

I should like at this point to affirm my humble adherence to what is commonly called "institutional religion." It is no doubt an ugly phrase, but it does express, in a non-party form, something which I believe to be indispensable to the religious life of the great mass of people, though it is repeatedly accused of failure. I desire to avoid any attempt to claim an apostolic antiquity for much which Catholicism practises to-day. But I believe that when it comes to matters of public worship, pastoral care of individuals, and the preservation and development of spiritual experience, there is far more to be said for Catholic practice, whether it be episcopal government, sacramental worship, carefully guarded casuistry, retreats, or other features of the same sort, than those who criticise it without having tried its psychological effects can possibly be aware. Catholicism is full of rich treasures which we dare not lose or suppress, and it is also full of rich promise. Future Catholicism will give us *nova et vetera*. I am, however, no lover of what may be called the mannerisms of the Latin Church, and with a strong belief in the perils of obscurantism, in the ministry of the word, and in free, simple, and vernacular public worship, I am proud to be an

Anglican.¹ God, however, is not an Englishman or a German, neither is the Holy Spirit either a Catholic or a Protestant. The new generations, if they receive Christ's yoke, will do so with new church systems to guard their experience and express their devotion, but I think they will find as some of us have found lately, that discipline can be tolerable when it stands between you and the hand of the enemy upon your throat. Neopaganism bids fair to be as fierce an adversary as any of its forerunners. If the army of Jesus is to advance victoriously, it must advance slowly, steadily, and unitedly.

2. *An external programme.*—A Church that is sure of its war-aims, that knows its mind on the one Central Fact that matters, has conquered half its troubles. It can preach a clear Gospel; it can look paganism fearlessly in the face; it can recruit for service with a ringing voice; it has nothing to be ashamed of or to conceal. Such a Church will be a courageous though gentle missionary. It will be friendly to men and women of faith all the world over, but it will have Some One to offer them Who, as the Light of the world and the Lord of Life can confidently claim their allegiance unto all eternity,—a Master whom they dare not deny since He suffered to win their hearts, and without whom they can have no true peace. A Church that is sure of its Absolute Basis, that is indeed founded upon a rock, should have no temptation to compromise with the spirit of worldliness, no desire to

¹ It would be dishonest not to admit that Anglicanism also has its mannerisms, some of them very bad ones

flirt with new fancy religions. It can save men the trouble of walking in by-paths, and offer them the broad highway of sober experience.

I have spoken of the Church as indispensable to religion. It may be thought that I have shown it too little respect, and reduced it to the level of a mere human institution. To say so would hardly be just. The main structure of human society is divinely planned, and I can scarcely regard the Church as other than a part of that plan, full though its human execution may be of much which is unworthy of the race as well as un-Christian. Like St. Paul I would look forward to a time when the spiritual focus of social religion in some future glorified plane of existence may be a glorious Church, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

IV

Consequences as regards the Future Life.

The acceptance of the religion of Jesus as absolute means the acceptance of His perspective as regards the soul. This may be summed up in a few clear points.

1. Our existence in bodily form on this planet is but a mere probationary stage in the whole of our spiritual existence.

2. This is not "other-worldliness" in the sense in which social reformers decry it. It means that a man regards the social and material well-being of his neighbours, (a) because he respects their spiritual

life, (b) because he is here to do the will of God, and this involves fair treatment of his fellow-men, and respect for the development of his own character and theirs, (c) because he is here to make this planet as good and beautiful as he can. If he fails to do his best, he is not fitting himself for the larger service which a future life or lives may have elsewhere in store for him.

3. Personality as a nucleus capable of association is a thing imperishable, of everlasting worth, to be made or marred here and now.

4. Personality may extend in the future life, but it will not lose its nucleus, nor will anything in it that is really good be subject to annihilation.

5. No construction of life on this planet which ignores human immortality can be tolerated as adequate or just. Eternal values *must* be respected.

6. While a plurality of spiritual worlds, and communication between incarnate and discarnate spirits need not be denied, the evidence for the existence of either is at present by no means convincing, and they cannot be regarded as Christian dogmas, or part of the absolute heritage of Christianity. If they ever come to be regarded as established facts, it will be as the result of God's blessing upon human research, and not as a Divine Revelation. The latter is concerned with demonstrating to us the values of the eternal world, and the victory of Divine Love.

It can scarcely be said that this perspective is very largely accepted by professing Christians at the present day. Much more uncompromising

adoption of it is needed as a working faith. We can hardly do too much to illustrate and keep before men's minds the fact that the dead are not dead, and that the life beyond us is as far as *we* can see limitless both in range and in possibilities.

On the other hand, the acceptance of Christ's view of the future life as an absolute guide must for ever do away with the notion of equality in heaven, no matter what kind of existence a man may have led here on earth. The artificial distinction between greater and lesser saints is probably a human device, convenient here below, but without any exact counterpart in the heavenly sphere. Nevertheless, the notion that there is no distinction between the faithful communicant and the loose-liver, and that the words of the official burial service¹ may be applied to both without any unreality, is clean contrary to the best instincts of man, and finds no basis in the mind of Christ. Our Master seemed to see a very clear distinction between different grades of souls, and little as we know about periods of purgation, we can feel certain that none are so perfect as not to need our prayers and commendation to the loving mercy of God, while few pass forward without having left behind the memory of at least one beautiful action, and some have indeed been examples of high virtue.

A few words must needs be added, on :

1. The resurrection of the body.
2. Judgment.

¹ I refer of course to the unrevised service.

I. With regard to the first. All Christians are agreed that the Resurrection of Christ is in respect of His humanity a fore-taste of the resurrection of all ordinary people who believe in Him and try to follow Him. If it is different in kind it loses its value. Its value for us depends on some identity in the process between His Resurrection and ours. Beyond this the path divides. Those who regard Jesus merely as a great moral teacher will deny that He can tell us anything about the future state of human personality, as to whether it will be clothed upon with glorified matter, or merely disembodied. Those who accept the traditional stories of the first Easter in their plain and literal sense will regard all human spirits as inevitably linked with matter in such a way that they must, in the next state of existence as much as in this, possess some form of recognizable personality, and many of them are more influenced in their beliefs by desire, sentiment, and affection, than by a real effort to think their position over clearly in all its implications. Those who believe in the fact of the Resurrection but decline to dogmatize over its mode will vary in the extent to which they criticise or reject the traditional stories, but will all agree that Our Lord's Spirit triumphantly survived the Crucifixion and that experience soon led His followers to realize that

i. Apparent defeat was really complete victory.

ii. His Presence was constantly in touch and communication with them,

and while these so-called modernists will be chary of defining the mode or plane of our future existence,

they will all unite in the confession that Man is immortal and that his bliss or woe in the future depends upon His harmony with the Mind and Person of Jesus who was dead and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of the future life in His own hands.

It is not for me to venture to judge between two schools of believers. Time and experience alone can show which of them holds the true interpretation of our sacred records. They seem to me both entitled to a place in the Christian community of the faithful. The persons, however, who I am quite sure have no right to call themselves heirs of Catholic tradition, and who are in danger of losing all the Gospel message are the people who say patronizingly : " Ah—Jesus of Nazareth. What a pity that he failed in his objective and died so young ! " I can see no hope for such save entire metanoia, since my gospel contains as its cardinal doctrine the belief that Jesus of Nazareth stands for Victory, and that Calvary is the most decisive battlefield in the world.

2. With regard to the doctrine of judgment, the position may be given very briefly. There must be a judgment, a critical sifting and estimate of all human action, since it is involved in the very conception of divine government. If a cycle or epoch comes to an end, or if the life of a planet comes to an end, the verdict of history, judged by whatever conception we may call God, is the verdict of God, and is presumably final. Further, if each individual life on this planet constitutes a period of probation,

then it is plain that at the end of that life there must be some estimate made by the Controlling Personality of the way in which that period has been employed, and of the use which has been made of its opportunities. We may even go further and suggest that the Divine Person is perpetually engaged in passing judgment or estimate upon our individual actions. "The Lord is King, be the peoples never so restless." But all these beliefs in the Divine Judgment are conditioned by our doctrine of God. Who is the Moral Governor of the world? What are His standards? What is His Character?

Here comes in the importance of what we have been seeking to investigate and establish. If Jesus of Nazareth gives us the fixation and definition of the Character of God, then we know what our Judge is like. As nations and individuals, it is before the tribunal of Christ that we are to stand.

But what shall we say about His return, His second coming? Here I must beg leave to depart from the standard of impartiality with which I have held the balance between modernist and traditionalist. It seems to me that the crude notions of the Second Advent in which Our Lord is actually depicted as descending in bodily form through the clouds, possibly to alight upon the Mount of Olives—that these belong to an earlier age which very imperfectly grasped His teaching. The fact that it expected His immediate bodily parousia (and was mistaken), the study of apocalyptic literature and its metaphors, the sifting out of His own teaching, and the evident

fact that much of it conflicts with the cruder Jewish apocalyptic, and finally the fact of the Johannine doctrine of the Holy Spirit of Jesus which is now seen to be quite an early development of Christian doctrine, all these things taken in accumulation tend to confirm one in the belief that the gift of Pentecost was the true return of Jesus. We live, in other words, in the age of Christ the Judge. The world since the first Whitsun has been in the Judgment epoch, or rather in the epoch in which God judges this planet by the standard of the Incarnation. Present judgment, therefore, by God in Christ is an absolute and vivid fact. Final judgment of the planet by the same standard is one which can hardly concern us. We ourselves must serve our own generation by the will of God, and by so doing serve future generations.

OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. BUT IF ANY MAN BUILDETH ON THE FOUNDATION, GOLD, SILVER, COSTLY STONES, WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE ; EACH MAN'S WORK SHALL BE MADE MANIFEST : FOR THE DAY SHALL DECLARE IT, BECAUSE IT IS REVEALED IN FIRE ; AND THE FIRE ITSELF SHALL PROVE EVERY MAN'S WORK, OF WHAT SORT IT IS.

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